

Turkish Area Studies Review

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The 2021 John Martin Lecture

To be held by Zoom on Saturday, 27 November 2021 at 5.00 pm

Dr Colin Imber

Reader in Turkish (ret)
University of Manchester

on

**The Joy of fatwas:
A glimpse into the Ottoman mind**

For updates see www.batas.org.uk



Spring Symposium 2022

We are hoping to be able to hold the symposium in April/May 2022. It is not possible to provide further details at this stage.

BATAS members will be kept updated by email on plans as they develop, which can also be followed at www.batas.org.uk



We say a little good-bye to the Logo that has accompanied us (TASG/BATAS) for over 30 years, designed by a school-boy of 15 with a love for Turkey, and with a good sense of a durable image. This is replaced by the suggestion of a somewhat more mature designer.



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

Editorial

The co-editors are very pleased to present another rich edition of the *BATAS Review*. Throughout the issue, readers will find a number of articles which address highly topical themes and subjects with regard to Turkey. The recent and current situation in Turkey has been highlighted by Ziya Öniş in The John Martin Lecture (this was promised in our last Editorial) and in an overview by Andrew Finkel. Soner Çağaptay examines the crucial role played by President Erdoğan in Turkish politics, Mina Toksöz overviews the economic situation in Turkey, while Ayla Göl discusses the significance of Turkey's relations with Central Asia.

The BATAS Symposium in May had as its overriding theme 'The Ottoman Empire versus the West'. Sir Noel Malcolm viewed the Ottoman Empire from a European perspective; Murat Akser took perceptions in film as the basis for his observations; and our own Yaprak Gürsoy discussed Turkish perceptions of the West. Yaprak needs a special mention here, because she delivered her talk in the middle of changing jobs, and we can now congratulate her for having secured the only Chair in Turkish Studies in the country. She has become Professor and Chair of Contemporary Turkish Studies at the London School of Economics & Political Science.

There are a number of diverse articles in the 'History, Society & Culture' section. These include historical surveys with, for example, an examination of CENTO, a critical analysis of developments at Boğaziçi University within a larger cultural perspective, an interview with a well-known actress concerning the current situation with regard to Turkish theatre, an abstract of a recently completed Ph.D dissertation on the migration to the UK of highly educated mothers from Turkey, and two poems.

A report of the last BRISMES conference is followed by book reviews by William Hale and Arin Bayaktaroğlu. The privately compiled book list by Oğuz Aydemir is quite unique. We also received an 'Appreciation' for İlhan Başgöz, the folklore historian, who died at the age of nearly 100.

The second article that was promised in our last Editorial – the webinar on 'Hagia Sophia' (23 January 2021) – will appear in our next issue.

The co-editors once again wish to extend their profound thanks to all contributors, to those who help us find new authors, and to our willing and reliable proof-readers. Our new Events Group will provide information about future events, which might on occasion even be 'unvirtual', although, of course, the Eventbrite link will remain important. In any case, information will be available at www.batas.org.uk and in the notices of future events that will be distributed by email and posted on Facebook.

Sigrid-B Martin
Co-Editor

Gareth Winrow
Co-Editor

The 2020 John Martin Lecture
Online Lecture Through Zoom
27 February 2021



**Turkish Foreign Policy in Flux:
 Traditional Alignments with the West
 versus the New Eastern Orientation¹**

by Ziya Öniş

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Turkish foreign policy (TFP) has experienced a profound transformation over the course of the twenty-year period that the Justice and Development Party (the AKP) has been in power. Indeed, a strong contrast could be discerned between TFP in the early AKP era (2002-2011) and the later phases of the AKP (post-2011 era). The ‘logic of interdependence’ constituted the key driving force of TFP during the early AKP era and Turkey was firmly anchored to Western democratic order in terms of its identity and normative credentials in addition to its institutional commitments in the economic and security realms. During the second phase of the AKP, however, ‘the logic of strategic autonomy’ emerged as the overriding principle. Unlike the first decade where the emphasis was single-mindedly on the use of soft power and diplomacy, hard power and coercive element started to play an increasingly important role in the second phase. Turkey has been actively involved in military operations in Syria, Iraq and Libya in recent years. Unilateral foreign policy actions have also been much more during the later phase of the AKP.



How do we explain this dramatic shift in TFP during the course of the last decade? A three-stage analysis may be proposed to explain this dramatic shift. At the global level, the relative decline of the West and the emergence of new centers of power such as China and BRICS (and re-emergence in the case of Russia) exercised a deep impact on countries like Turkey (Poland and Hungary in the European periphery are also striking examples), torn between their traditional alignments with the West and new, emerging partnerships with the East in an increasingly post-Western or post-liberal international order. At the regional level, the failure of the Arab Spring and, notably, the tragic state of affairs involving the Syrian

¹ The present essay draws heavily from Mustafa Kutlay and Ziya Öniş, ‘Turkish Foreign Policy in a Post-Western Order: Strategic Autonomy or New Forms of Dependence?’, *International Affairs*, Vol. 97, No. 4, July 2021: 1085-1104.

civil war created new instabilities and security challenges, such as the intensification of the Kurdish conflict. At the domestic level, Turkey experienced a process of stage by stage democratic backsliding leading to the establishment of a competitive authoritarian, Russian-style presidential regime, institutionalized by the referendum of 2017 and the June elections of 2018. There is no doubt that these three different elements – global, regional and domestic – should not be seen as totally distinct, but as mutually interlocking phenomena.

Charismatic populist-nationalist-authoritarian leaders seems to be a central feature of the emerging post-liberal international order. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had already made his mark in Turkish politics as the Mayor of Istanbul during the 1990s. As the leader of the AKP, he has been a dominant and influential figure in Turkish politics right from the very beginning, following the party's landslide victory in the elections of November 2002. His role in the foreign policy process became progressively more dominant during the later phase of the AKP, as the overall regime became increasingly more authoritarian and personalistic. In retrospect, five major principles seem to be at the heart of Erdoğan's foreign policy vision and these principles played an important role in shaping TFP in recent years, as traditional structures such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs lost their importance and became marginal in the policy making process.

- i Turkey is not a typical middle power but a truly global power taking into account its historical legacies as well as military capabilities.
- ii Internal and external security concerns are a fundamental driving force of foreign policy.
- iii Turkey is a leading country in the Islamic World based on its Sunni-Muslim identity.
- iv Russia and China are key partners in a shifting global context, where Turkey positions itself as a leading country in the "Global South", pushing for a multi-polar global order and promoting the interests of the weak and underprivileged segments of the global order
- v Relations with the West are to be constructed and maintained in transactional terms in the realms of mutual economic and security interests.

Liberal or Western norms, however, no longer constitute a prime reference point for foreign policy as was the case during the first decade of the AKP rule. These underlying principles, in turn, lead to a broad approach to foreign policy based on the concept of 'strategic autonomy'. The key idea is that Turkey is a sufficient powerful country to be able to act independently and in line with its national interests on a number of key foreign policy issues, whilst balancing its relations with Western and non-Western global Powers in the process.

A central element of TFP during the second phase of AKP involved a growing affinity with the Russia-China axis. Russia had already emerged as an important partner for Turkey with the collapse of communism and the emergence of the post-Cold War context. However, during the 1990s and the early 2000s relations with Russia developed in a broader context where Turkey was firmly embedded in the West in economic, security and identity terms. This strategy started to change notably with the disappointments of the EU membership process, which had already appeared to have reached a stalemate from 2005 onwards. Erdoğan effectively capitalized on the failures and humiliations of the stalled EU membership process and clearly signaled his intentions as early as 2013 by arguing that Turkey could become a member of the Shanghai Co-operation Organization as an alternative to EU membership. The stage

by stage decay in Turkish democracy during the post-2011 era pushed Turkey further away from the Western alliance and brought the country closer and closer to the style of authoritarian capitalism exemplified by the Russia-China axis. In that respect, the failed military coup attempt on 15 July 2016 constituted another landmark event in Turkey's changing relations with the Western and non-Western global actors. Erdoğan and the AKP leadership, having survived the notorious failed coup attempt, were highly disappointed with the attitudes of the United States and the key European countries. This event more than anything else aggravated the already prevalent anti-Western sentiments in Turkey. In contrast, ties with Russia, which had undergone a temporary breakdown due to the aircraft crisis of November 2015, showed a strong improvement. Putin, unlike the Western leaders, showed strong sympathy for Erdoğan after 15 July and the Turkish leadership also looked more closely to Russia in terms of its future security.

In understanding Turkish foreign policy in recent years, one also needs to draw attention to the populist dividend in the domestic sphere. A highly nationalistic and ambitious foreign policy based on the notion of 'strategic autonomy' has served as an effective tool of building and maintaining a broad-based electoral coalition at the domestic level and drawing attention away from economic problems and other forms of governance crisis. Furthermore, foreign policy in this context has become an important tool for fragmenting and weakening the opposition, thereby attempting to strengthen and consolidate the nascent presidential regime.

Turning back to the theme of Turkey's growing affinity with the Russia-China axis, Russia has certainly been the dominant element. Clear indications exist, however, that China is becoming increasingly important in the context of recent TFP and is likely to become even more important if the presidential regime proves to be durable in the years ahead. Turkey's relationship with Russia has assumed a novel qualitative dimension in recent years. Part of this is due to the personal affinity between the two key leaders, Erdoğan and Putin. The domestic political trajectories and political economies of Russia and Turkey also exhibited considerable similarities as the Putin-style presidential regime clearly served as a kind of role model for Erdoğan's Turkey. This was in sharp contrast to the previous decades where the relationship had developed in an environment in which Turkey was firmly embedded in the transatlantic alliance in normative and material terms.



A new critical security dimension was added to the Turkey-Russian relationship in the later phase as Turkey increasingly leaned towards non-Western Powers for its security concerns. Russia became an insider and immediate neighbor of Turkey in Syria and the Middle East. Turkey's beyond the border military initiatives in Syria had to be through the consent of Russia, although the two countries appeared to be ironically on the opposite sides, with Russia supporting and Turkey firmly opposing the Assad regime. The purchase of S-400 missiles from Russia proved to be a critical turning point in this context with widespread ramifications in creating deep tensions and frictions with the United States and other NATO partners.

Even if not on the scale of Russia at this juncture, China is increasingly becoming an important actor for Turkey. The growing Turkey-China relationship reflects the importance of two key elements. The first element concerns the growing global reach of China in recent years under the presidency of Xi Jinping, with major initiatives such as the Belt and Road initiative and large-scale lending from the Asian Infrastructure

and Investment Bank (AIIB). The second element concerns Turkey's increasing distancing away from the West and looking for alternative finance and diplomatic support as a means of strengthening and consolidating the nascent presidential regime. The relationship with China also gathered significant momentum following the failed coup attempt of July 2016, with Turkey becoming increasingly involved in the Belt and Road initiative. Turkey's invitation to the annual BRICS Summit in Johannesburg in July 2018 as the Representative of the Islamic Conference Organization constituted another important development in this rapidly evolving relationship.

Having set the stage for the new TFP, the key issue is whether Turkey will be able to maintain this balancing act between the West and the East based on the principle of strategic autonomy. The process of balancing great powers has certainly become far more difficult following the election of Joe Biden as the new US president in November 2020. The geopolitical competition between US and the EU, on the one hand, and China and Russia, on the other appears to have intensified with Biden's presidency and countries like Turkey, arguably, have less space to maneuver and face greater pressures to choose sides in this stiffer international environment. Certainly, Erdoğan felt more comfortable with a like-minded populist leader like Trump in conducting bilateral relations, even though the Turkey-US relationship during the Trump era was also characterized by significant tensions and conflicts. Turkey is already feeling the pressures of Biden's presidency and facing the difficulties of managing the economic and security relationships with the United States and the Western Alliance, given that Turkey is heavily dependent on the East in economic and security terms.

The S-400 issue aptly highlights the difficulties and contradictions of new style Turkish foreign policy based on autonomous action and attempts to balance rival global powers. For Russia, the sale of S-400 missiles to Turkey made perfect sense. It was a source of export revenue and was also part of a broader strategy to tear Turkey away from NATO and the Western Alliance. For Turkey, however, the decision was clearly part of an inconsistent strategy where Turkey wanted to maintain its organic links to NATO, whilst buying missiles from a rival power, which other NATO members saw as an existentialist threat. With growing pressures from the United States, Turkey



has not been able to activate the S-400 missiles. At the same time, it is confronted with sanctions from the United States and has been excluded from the lucrative F-35 program. These sanctions will not disappear unless Turkey radically changes its policy and commits itself fully to returning or not using the Russian missiles, a possibility, which also does not appear to be on the cards at the moment. In a recent NATO Summit, Erdoğan clearly expressed the view that Turkey will not abandon the idea of using S-400 missiles. The danger of this incoherent policy is that it may leave Turkey isolated and weakened in an increasingly difficult and competitive international environment. To add a further dimension, Turkey's increasingly unilateral moves based on the principle of strategic autonomy, such as natural gas exploration in the Eastern Mediterranean, or attempts to resolve the perennial Cyprus conflict or sending military force to Libya not only generate criticism from Turkey's traditional Western partners, who more and more perceive Turkey as a geopolitical rival, but also fail to receive the support of Russia. Despite the growing affinity between Russia and Turkey in recent years, the relationship also embodies significant conflict in many different areas ranging from Syria to the Eastern Mediterranean to Libya. The recent rapprochement between Turkey and Ukraine, as a means of pleasing Biden and the United States, has, indeed aggravated tensions

between Turkey and Russia. Certainly, the Turkey-Russia partnership looks significantly short of a 'strategic partnership'. It is strongly driven by two key strong leaders, Erdoğan and Putin, and lacks the institutional depth that Turkey has enjoyed with the West over several decades. Russia will certainly fail to consider Turkey as a 'strategic partner' as long as Turkey continues its long-standing status as a NATO member. It is important to emphasize that neither Russia nor China has been forthcoming in terms of financial assistance during Turkey's recent currency crisis, suggesting that the West continues to be far more important for Turkey in economic terms and contradictory foreign policy moves are also costly in terms of discouraging direct investment – predominantly from Western sources.

Given the obvious costs associated with the new style TFP, as the S-400 issue clearly demonstrates, what would be an alternative and constructive path for Turkish foreign policy in the coming years? An alternative path would clearly be to return to the basic principles of Turkish foreign policy, which had been dominant throughout the Republican era, except for the past decade. Ideally, Turkey, in the emerging international environment, should be firmly anchored in the coalition of democratic capitalist states and hence, strong ties to the Western alliance not only in institutional, but also in normative terms, should be the primary anchor of foreign policy, around which ties to other entities such as Russia and China could be organized. Whether Turkey will be able to achieve a re-transformation of its foreign policy in this direction is highly uncertain and depends critically on Turkey's domestic political trajectory. A process of re-democratization in Turkey, with the opposition harnessing sufficient support to win the next presidential election, would constitute a crucial step in this direction. A process of political change and re-democratization in Turkey appears to be a pre-condition for a shift of foreign policy whereby Turkey would again play a benign regional and global middle power role as in the case of the early phase of the AKP era. It is through such a shift that Turkey can serve as a role model for the Middle East and the Muslim world, and it is through such role model capabilities that Turkey can make a genuinely positive impact in its neighborhood as opposed to strategy of active interventionism and involvement in the domestic political processes of key Arab countries. The key point is that the more Turkey is involved in the internal affairs of the Middle East and takes sides in sectarian conflicts, the more it is likely to undermine its influence and end up in a position of isolation.



☺☺☺☺☺



Recent Developments in Turkey

Andrew Finkel

Correspondent & Columnist, was based in Turkey for over 30 Years,
Co-founder of P24, an Istanbul-based NGO for
freedom of expression and press integrity

Charles de Gaulle fell foul of it, Felipe Gonzalez was tripped by it, Margaret Thatcher was a text book case. The gist of the ten-year rule is that after a decade of undisputed leadership, power spins out of control. Politicians' natural feel for the popular pulse instead starts to rub public opinion the wrong way. There are exceptions, of course. Angela Merkel survived as chancellor for 16 years, although she had been in the process of resigning for the last three. And then, there is Recep Tayyip Erdoğan who came to high office in 2003 and has appeared to defy political gravity ever since.

Mr Erdoğan has (to cut a long story short) managed to outflank potential rivals within his own camp, neutralise opposition parties and move into a presidential palace where, under a revised constitution and surrounded by the near imperial trappings of office, his authority goes largely unchecked. His first ten years as prime minister were spent fixing (critics would say papering-over) the cracks in Turkey's post-war polity. His early accomplishments, again to summarise briefly, were to shore up public finances but also to give voice to an underclass which felt unrepresented by a political elite. His reward has been to be re-elected president in 2014 and he has transformed that office into a powerful executive. Until recently few commentators would have betted against his capacity to regain a third term and, thus, by 2023, being at the virtual helm for a full fifth of the Turkish Republic's 100 years. And yet if there is one theme to emerge from this report on the last six months of events in Turkey, it is that there is now open talk of a post-Erdoğan era.

The president's current difficulties are essentially those of a populist leader whose policies no longer work to make him popular. This dilemma is similar to politicians elsewhere in the world for whom reality undermines rhetoric. The Erdoğan administration's particular fantasy is not anti-vaxxing but, as discussed in previous reports, that Turkey can sustain a low interest, high growth strategy without producing high inflation and exposing the currency to constant crisis. So, while Turkey may be bouncing back from the deep troughs of the pandemic induced lockdown (GDP rose 21.7% in the three months to June 2021) commentators describe this as a K-shaped recovery in which the export sector does well (through a cheaper currency and a revival of demand abroad) but bodes badly for service and domestic orientated sectors that provide employment and put food on the table for the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) base. A striking example, and something which must terrify AKP politicians more than an upsurge in Covid, is a development in the construction industry which has been a major engine of prosperity (The AKP decades are symbolised as much by the shopping centre, the housing estate or a new airport as much as by a new mosque). Recently IMKON, the confederation of building contractors and a lobby which one would assume had the government's back,

announced a 15-day moratorium on all building activity to protest what it declared to be the “extortionate price of cement”.²

Of course, Tayyip Erdoğan is the devil Turkey knows and certainly one of his strengths until now has been to create a sense of no alternative and to vilify the opposition for past deeds. However, as power becomes increasingly concentrated in his hands, it is correspondingly difficult for him to avoid the perception that he is the problem. Speculation is even now rife, particularly on social media, whether he is physically able to do his job, despite being nearly a dozen years younger than Joe Biden. The president’s health does not come under a public right to know and rumours are fuelled by a lack of transparency. Certain incidents are worth citing, not as evidence of infirmity, but as chinks in the presidential public image which until recently seemed impregnable. The first was the sight of Mr Erdoğan nodding off ever so briefly while wishing his supporters a happy Bayram holiday. This in itself means little – anyone can suffer from overwork – but pundits were quick to point out³ that the holiday broadcast was pre-recorded and therefore the drooping eyelids could easily have been edited out. This led in turn to more conspiracy theories that the presidential inner circle was now intent on embarrassing their boss. That word “embarrassing” very much comes to mind in an interview Mr Erdoğan gave to loyalist television channels defending his government’s widely criticised failure to contain the wild fires that devastated large swathes of the Aegean and Mediterranean coastal areas. Viewers were treated to a glimpse of a teleprompter he was using to respond to what could only be called “softball” questions from a team of four housetrained journalists. At a point when the president appeared momentarily tongue-tied, there were sounds of off-camera prompts, of an aide whispering to help him out. The contrast is to the eloquent Tayyip Erdoğan who won election after election with fiery rhetoric and a knack of speaking effortlessly to the concerns of his supporters.

In the same tele-prompted interview, Mr Erdoğan clearly anticipated some of the mockery he was about to receive on Twitter when he declared he did “not have a positive view of social media” and promised legislation to fetter criticism when parliament reconvened.⁴ Why this is necessary remains to be seen, given that 38,581 legal actions for “insult” have been initiated during the Erdoğan presidency compared to the 1,816 cases in total brought by the previous five presidents.⁵ However, the BBC Turkish service has indeed reported that the government is drafting legislation that will equate “organized acts of disinformation” and disinformation aiming to create chaos in society “as a form of terrorism”, and which will regulate social media platforms including penalties of up to five years in prisons for failing to provide information to authorities about anonymous accounts.⁶

² As reported in *Dünya*, 9 September 2021, accessed at <https://www.dunya.com/ekonomi/muteahhitler-is-durdurma-kararini-uygulamaya-basladi-haberi-633199>

³ *Duvar*, 22 July 2021, accessed at <https://www.duvarenglish.com/erdogan-falls-asleep-momentarily-during-eid-greeting-video-goes-viral-video-58264>

⁴ *Bianet* 12 August 2021. accessed at <https://m.bianet.org/english/politics/248645-erdogan-uses-teleprompter-to-answer-journalists-questions-during-live-broadcast>

⁵ *Bianet*, 27 August 2021, accessed at <https://bianet.org/english/politics/249380-erdogan-sued-38-581-people-for-insulting-the-president-in-six-years>

⁶ *BBC News Türkçe*, 1 September 2021, accessed at <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-58406316>

Mr Erdoğan's difficulties are not, of course, sudden but part of a storm that began to gather in 2019 when the AKP lost the mayorships of major municipalities – or, in the case of Istanbul, losing twice in short succession after the electoral board performed a sleight of hand to declare the election result void but with the subsequent restaging of the poll producing an even worse result. The government's response has been to strengthen central control and weaken local authorities' capacity to respond to the needs of their constituents – particularly noticeable in 2020, during the first flush of the pandemic. The minister of the interior actually blocked funds raised in donation campaigns to provide support and then opened a criminal investigation into Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu of Istanbul and Mansur Yavaş, his Ankara counterpart.⁷ It was Mayor Erdoğan in 1994 who pushed himself onto the national stage as a successful city manager but who was also able to present himself as a political victim when he was removed from office after doing jail-time for reading a nationalist poem at a rally. His attempts to render new rivals ineffectual in the eyes of the electorate, he must know, are fraught with peril. And indeed, poll after poll suggests that either mayor would beat the incumbent Erdoğan by at least 10 percentage points in a straight presidential contest.⁸ Even worse news for him is that the president's disapproval rating is now running at over 50%.⁹ The latest (September 2021) Yöneylem public research agency numbers and those of the polling firm Avrasya¹⁰ suggest the president will be hard pressed to get more than 35% of the vote.

This is not to write Mr Erdoğan's political obituary. If anything, the present author suffers from the same cognitive dissonance of a plurality of the Turkish electorate who tell pollsters they will not vote for the Mr Erdoğan and yet still cannot believe he will lose the election.¹¹ At the same time there is no denying that a proven genius for consolidating a conservative base or distracting the electorate with mega-projects, foreign policy adventures or threats of another attempted coup, is wearing thin. The pandemic and the economic hardships it induced means that the electorate are not easily diverted from their own immediate problems.

This explains a not particularly abstruse source of tension in Turkish political life, that of faltering. Mr Erdoğan is looking for a plateau of relative peace and prosperity to go for an early poll ahead of 2023 parliamentary and presidential elections. In this regard, too, fate has not been kind. A series of near biblical plagues have helped undermine a "can-do" reputation provoking accusations of misrule and corruption. Topping this list are the forest fires of late July and August which ravaged the coastal areas along with areas as far inland as Tunceli. The *New York Times* listed 170 wildfires in 39 of Turkey's 81 provinces, destroying farmland and homes. Tourists who had braved the pandemic for a holiday were forced to evacuate from their hotels. Some eight people died in the conflagrations with many others hospitalised from burns and smoke

⁷ 'The Political and Economic Impact of the Corona Virus in Turkey', *Edam*, 2020-1 pp. 11-12 accessed at <https://edam.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/The-Political-and-Economic-Impact-of-the-Corona-Virus-in-Turkey.pdf>

⁸ *The National News*, 2 June 2021, accessed at <https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/turkey-s-erdogan-swings-at-main-rivals-as-polls-reveal-falling-support-1.1233254>

⁹ <https://twitter.com/metropoll/status/1431858014517141504> ; *Bloomberg*, 25 May 2021, accessed at <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-05-25/erdogan-s-poll-rating-hits-all-time-low-as-economic-woes-grow>

¹⁰ *T24*, 31 August 2021, accessed at <https://t24.com.tr/foto-haber/avrasya-arastirma,12911/2>

¹¹ *Ahval News*, 11 September 2020, accessed at <https://ahvalnews.com/recep-tayyip-erdogan/majority-turks-believe-erdogan-will-win-next-presidential-election>

inhalation.¹² Istanbul University's Cerrahpaşa Faculty of Forestry estimated that fires this year reduced 157,482 hectares of land to ash – a nine-fold increase on the period 2008-2020 when an area of 17,578 hectares burned.¹³

While Turkey was not the only Mediterranean country this summer to suffer the consequences of climate change, many Turks believe the extent of the damage was aggravated by an ill-prepared government sitting on its hands. The principal complaint was that Turkey had no firefighting planes in working order of its own to douse the flames. It finally managed to lease three amphibious aircraft from Russia – one of which crashed causing the deaths of the Turkish and Russian crew members on board. Opposition MPs were quick to point out that the presidential palace had 13 planes at its disposal. Mr Erdoğan courted additional opprobrium while touring the stricken resort city of Marmaris when he began to throw packets of loose black tea to passers-by from a campaign bus, forcing the same sort of reaction as Marie Antoinette when she commended the hungry of Paris to eat brioche. It did prompt the phrase AkParTea to trend on Twitter



Disaster struck again in the weeks following the fires as flash floods devastated mountainous regions of the Black Sea, with Bartın, Kastamonu and Sinop being the provinces worst affected. Climate change was again named the culprit for a deluge that produced an official death toll of some 81 people and inundated an area some 240 kilometres wide – with water four metres deep in places. However, others blamed rapacious urban development that resulted in poorly constructed bridges and communities constructed on floodplains without proper drainage. The Black Sea is an AKP stronghold, but the government did itself no favour in trying to run a charitable campaign to raise money for relief rather than immediately pledge public resources. The hashtag #iban reflected popular indignation that citizens were being asked to fund administrative incompetence.

By far the strangest global warming-affected phenomenon to hit Turkey was an invasion last June of “sea snot” which occurred on the Sea of Marmara around Istanbul. More politely known as marine mucilage, this is a slimy, gelatinous layer of micro-organisms that thrives by feeding off untreated wastewater. It upsets fishing and tourism and is dangerous in as much as it can harbour e-coli but also because it suffocates the marine life below even as it sinks from the surface.¹⁴ The infestation occasioned a massive clean-up operation and, like flood and fire, helped focus minds on the environmental cost of untutored economic development. The logo of the AKP party is after all an incandescent lightbulb, a device which is being phased out throughout the world for generating 95% more heat than light.

June was also the month in which Alok Sharma, the UK president-designate of this autumn’s COP26 climate change summit visited Turkey.¹⁵ Turkey had at one point

¹² *The New York Times*, 4 August 2021, accessed at <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/04/world/europe/turkey-fires-erdogan-anger.html>

¹³ *Anadolu Agency*, 7 August 2021, accessed at <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/nearly-9-fold-increase-in-area-burned-in-turkish-wildfires-in-2021/2327263>

¹⁴ *CGTN*, 21 June 2021, accessed at <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2021-06-20/Marine-mucilage-threatens-Turkey-s-Marmara-sea-11fOMroceRO/index.html>

¹⁵ *GOV.UK*, 18 June 2021, accessed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/joint-statement-following-visit-of-cop26-president-designate-to-turkey>

competed with Glasgow to host the meeting despite being one of six countries (and the only G20 member) not to have ratified the Paris Accord. It formally objects to having to adopt the targets of being a developed rather than developing nation and has set itself the goal of 21% reduction of emissions by 2030.¹⁶ However, this failure to ratify may be a luxury that Turkish industry may struggle to afford when the CBAM (Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism) instituted by the EU, kicks in by 2026. This is a form of emissions tax and a study by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development suggest that exports of cement, aluminium, and steel could incur an annual environmental levy of anywhere between EUR 399 million and 771 million.¹⁷

If the analysis here is correct the difficulties in which the government finds itself has worked to soften what had been an increasingly aggressive and even isolationist foreign policy. The month of May saw the first face-to-face talks between Egyptian and Turkish officials since the down fall of President Mohamed Morsi, in Cairo, resulting in a toning down of the vitriol broadcast from Muslim Brotherhood television stations based in Istanbul. Differences over Libya remain the stumbling block to the restoration of diplomatic relations.¹⁸ In August, President Erdoğan gave a call to Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, capping what Bloomberg news agency described as nearly a decade of hostile rhetoric between Turkey and UAE over proxy conflicts from Libya to Syria.¹⁹ By September it was the turn of Armenia to engage in positive overtures, raising again the prospect, however remote, of re-opening the border given that Azerbaijan has had more than a pound of flesh from Turkey and is no longer in a position to object.²⁰

Turkey's motives for reversing long held ideological positions are of course economic and the need to force the pace of recovery from the pandemic doldrums by encouraging trade. However, the election of Joe Biden is also a probable factor. Washington may be withdrawing from an active role in the region but, unlike Donald Trump, Biden is less tolerant of Ankara's disruptive tendencies. The last issue of this bulletin saw President Erdoğan still waiting by the phone for a call from the no-longer newly elected US president. That call finally came, but on the 23 April, the day before the commemoration of what Mr Biden was to explicitly refer to as the Armenian genocide. The timing meant that the Turkish president could not do what he had so often done in the past: spin his relation with his American counterpart to demonstrate influence and to enhance his own prestige. As US and NATO forces prepared to leave Afghanistan, Turkey again tried to assert its strategic importance by proposing to take over the running of Kabul airport – a qualified offer which it was forced to reconsider as the Afghan *ancien régime* swiftly collapsed. However, Turkey was among the first to call for constructive engagement with the interim government and the prospect of running the airport in a civil capacity was again on the table.

¹⁶ *Anadolu Agency*, 17 June 2021, accessed at <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/energy/renewable/cop26-president-visits-turkey-to-strengthen-climate-action-cooperation/32989>

¹⁷ *Balkan Green Energy News*, 6 August 2021, accessed at <https://balkangreenenergynews.com/turkish-exporters-to-eu-face-eur-771-million-burden-due-to-carbon-border-tax/>

¹⁸ *Aljazeera*, 6 May 2021, accessed at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/6/egypt-and-turkey-hold-frank-official-talks-first-since-2013>

¹⁹ *Bloomberg*, 31 August 2021, accessed at <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-08-31/turkey-s-erdogan-holds-call-with-uae-leader-as-tensions-ease>

²⁰ *Eurasianet*, 13 September 2021, accessed at <https://eurasianet.org/prospects-of-armenia-turkey-normalization-appear-closer-than-ever>

This show of diplomacy, however, is unlikely to win much admiration at home where (despite the absence of a common border) there is widespread fear of an influx of Afghan refugees. There are already some four million refugees in Turkey, according to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees – the vast majority from Syria (3.7 million) but many from Afghanistan.²¹ Anti-refugee sentiment produced ugly scenes in the Altındağ neighbourhood of Ankara when a mob tried to avenge the death of a Turkish teenager allegedly killed during a fight with Syrian refugees. An estimated 1000-strong crowd threw stones, overturned cars, attacked homes and vandalised shops owned by Syrians. The district is largely pro-AKP (64.4% of the vote at the 2019 mayoral election with the opposition Republic People's Party (CHP) not even fielding a candidate). As part of its alliance with the nationalist Good Party (İP)) however, the CHP has taken a lead in opposing the settlement of Syrian refugees. Its party leader, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu recently pledged to repatriate legally all Syrian and Afghan refugees within two years of taking office²². Accusations abound that Turkey was being primed as a resettlement colony for fleeing Afghans, just as it been encouraged through EU subsidies to accept Syrians. This prompted President Erdoğan (19 August) to declare his country could not become a “refugee warehouse”. Turkey plans to extend a 156-kilometre Trump-style concrete wall along its border with Iran – a further 243 kilometres of a 543 kilometre-long border. Turkey's engagement with the Afghan interim government is not an endorsement of Taliban norms, as is sometimes depicted, but part of a pragmatic policy of providing the Afghan people with the security to keep them in their homes.

President Erdoğan's “Teflon” reputation for getting himself out of jams in part dates from the 17 December 2013 corruption scandal²³ when some 52 members of the AKP inner circle were detained on charges of bribery, corruption, fraud, money laundering and gold smuggling. In time, the government was able to turn on its attackers – many of whom had connections to the Fethullah Gülen movement – by painting the allegations as a “judicial coup” conspiracy. By 7 January 2014, some 350 police officers including the chiefs of financial and organised crime units lost their jobs by decree, literally at the stroke of midnight. The scandal did claim some scalps, however. Four ministers were either fired or resigned including Erdoğan Bayraktar – minister for the environment and urban planning. Mr Bayraktar raised eyebrows at the time by saying that he did nothing without the knowledge of then Prime Minister Erdoğan who, as he told NTV television station, “should also resign” – a sentiment for which he subsequently apologised. Now, in another interview for a German-based web radio, the former minister has said that all the accusations against him, including those released in bevy of illegally recorded phone recordings, were absolutely true.²⁴

²¹ Numbers of refugees, many of whom are unregistered, vary, of course. There are an estimated 3.6 million Syrian refugees in Turkey. See *World Bank*, 22 June 2021, accessed at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2021/06/22/10-years-on-turkey-continues-its-support-for-an-ever-growing-number-of-syrian-refugees> or *Bloomberg*, 7 September 2021, accessed at <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2021-09-07/turkey-and-erdogan-want-to-guard-the-kabul-airport-and-curry-favor-with-biden>

²² *Hürriyet Daily News*, 3 September 2021, accessed at <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/all-refugees-will-be-back-in-their-home-in-2-years-after-taking-power-chp-leader-167593>

²³ For a short cut for those whose memories need refreshing:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2013_corruption_scandal_in_Turkey

²⁴ *Ahval*, 31 August 2021, accessed at <https://ahvalnews.com/2013-corruption-probe/ex-turkish-ministers-2013-graft-probe-confession-sparks-reactions>

However damaging, it is unlikely that Mr Bayraktar's allegations will stick a second time. Yet another and entirely unlikely whistle blower has made a very deep impression on Turkish public opinion. Sedat Peker is a mafia figure who has a self-confessed on-again, off-again relation with the Turkish state for whom he has performed various favours, including (again by his own, uncorroborated admission) leading an assault on *Hürriyet* newspaper in 2015 to put pressure on its proprietor. He is now on the run in a hotel in Dubai from where, since May, he has made a series of YouTube webcasts, some of which have attracted over ten million views. The videos are artfully presented, his accusations unproven and he gesticulates and talks like an actor in a Turkish production of *Guys and Dolls*. If his tales of grotesque misdeeds, if unproven, still ring true, it is because he all too often points an accusing finger at himself. Over ten webcasts, he has systematically shredded the reputation of the current minister of the interior Süleyman Soylu from whom he says he once enjoyed protection – and has thus weakened the minister's bid as a contender to succeed Tayyip Erdoğan,. Peker has also levelled charges against another interior minister, Mehmet Ağar, a figure from the 1990s whom he accuses of drug trafficking, using extortion to acquire a marina in an Aegean resort and being involved in politically motivated murder. He has also accused Mehmet Ağar's son, a current AKP parliamentarian, of the rape of a Kazakh journalist who was to die in suspicious circumstances. Peker has also contradicted the story of Erkam Yıldırım, the son of a former prime minister, that visits to Venezuela had anything to do with distributing PPE to guard against Covid, but was of running drugs instead. One of the most damaging of his charges is that Turkey sent weapons to al-Nusra through SADAT, a paramilitary organisation formed by a former advisor to the President. Turkey has always denied that it ran guns to Islamist militants across the Syrian border and accusations to that effect published in the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper earned its editor-in-chief, Can Dündar, a five-year prison sentence for espionage – which he curtailed by fleeing to Germany.



Sedat Peker has been careful not to implicate Tayyip Erdoğan, although this may be little comfort since he does accuse those surrounding the president to be riddled with corruption. The broadcasts have ceased for the time being. Peker has taken to Twitter because he says his UAE hosts have forbidden him to go onto YouTube – a sign perhaps of the growing thaw in the Emirates relations with Turkey.

Peker is on the ultra-nationalist wing of Turkish politics. He said he would “shower in the blood” of academics who had signed a peace petition in 2016 calling for an end to fighting between the security forces and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in southeast Turkish cities. The AKP relies on the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) for its parliamentary majority in an informal coalition. However, it may now be a case of the tail wagging the dog as the MHP tries to steer the government into an ever-increasing hard line against Kurdish cultural and political aspirations. If the CHP mayors of Istanbul and Ankara feel the government is trying to pull the rug out from under their feet, this is nothing as compared to the uphill struggle of the HDP. Not a single one of the 45 provincial capital mayors in the Kurdish southeast of the country elected in March 2019 was in office by October of the following year. They had been replaced with centrally-appointed trustees.²⁵ At the end of March 2021, the Constitutional Court

²⁵ *BBC News Türkçe*, 2 October 2020, accessed at <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-54386357>

rejected on procedural grounds a case for the closure of the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) – whose popular former leader, Selahattin Demirtaş, remains in jail despite a European Court of Human Rights decision calling for his release. This, in turn, prompted Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of the MHP, to cite as “urgent objectives both the closure of the Constitutional Court and the dissolution of the HDP.”²⁶ By June, the Court had, however, accepted a revised indictment and the case now proceeds. To close a party the 15 judges must decide by a two-thirds majority, which is by no means guaranteed.

Indeed, the longer the case goes on, the greater the challenge it may pose to the AKP which relies on a conservative Kurdish vote. In an interview for the T24 news site, Bekir Ağırdir, head of the respected KONDA public polling agency, suggested that Turkish ultra-nationalist identity politics was a double-edged sword and that any attempt to alter the voting law to benefit the MHP (which struggles to get over the required ten percent threshold) could in fact strengthen the HDP vote to 15 percent given that the Kurdish demographic among the electorate was rising from 18 to 23 percent of new voters.

At the heart of the ten, let alone twenty-year rule, is that you are left without anyone else to blame. The absence of easy options to restore the government's popularity may well explain a depressing tendency to undermine the whole democratic process and suppress dissent. In this regard, the US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices in Turkey for 2020, released at the end of March 2021, makes for unhappy reading in the litany of abuse that it cites:

“Significant human rights issues included: reports of arbitrary killings; suspicious deaths of persons in custody; forced disappearances; torture; arbitrary arrest and continued detention of tens of thousands of persons, including opposition politicians and former members of parliament, lawyers, journalists, human rights activists, and employees of the U.S. Mission, for purported ties to “terrorist” groups or peaceful legitimate speech; the existence of political prisoners, including elected officials; politically motivated reprisal against individuals located outside the country; significant problems with judicial independence; severe restrictions on freedom of expression, the press, and the internet, including violence and threats of violence against journalists, closure of media outlets, and unjustified arrests or criminal prosecution of journalists and others for criticizing government policies or officials, censorship, site blocking and the existence of criminal libel laws; severe restriction of freedoms of assembly, association, and movement; some cases of refoulement of refugees; and violence against women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex persons and members of other minorities.”²⁷



²⁶ *Hürriyet Daily News*, 1 April 2021, accessed at <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/nationalist-leader-criticizes-top-court-after-it-returns-indictment-aimed-to-ban-hdp-163602>

²⁷ From the executive summary of the *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Turkey* accessed at <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/turkey/>



Erdoğan's Game Plan

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Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is one of the most consequential leaders of modern Turkey. Since November 2002, Erdoğan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP) have won over a dozen nationwide elections mainly on a platform of strong economic growth. Erdoğan has served as Turkey's prime minister between 2003 and 2014, and as president since.

How He Built Power

Since he first entered national politics in the 1990s as mayor of Istanbul, Erdoğan cast himself as a poor man from the other side of the tracks. He has always rooted his political identity in standing up for common people, advocating for their interests against the elites. To this end, Erdoğan has demonized, brutalized, and cracked down on demographics unlikely to vote for him.

Over the years, Erdoğan has targeted electoral constituencies that are not likely to vote for him. This strategy has skyrocketed polarization in Turkey: Turkey is now sharply split between pro- and anti-Erdoğan camps: a conservative and Turkish nationalist right-wing coalition that supports him, and the latter, a loose group of leftists, secularists, centrist Turkish nationalists, liberals and Kurdish nationalists and others that vehemently opposes him.²⁹ Overall, this strategy has also fuelled resentment among targeted populations, producing deep societal polarization and throwing Turkey into a protracted crisis.³⁰

However, Erdoğan also has a bright side. Together with his nativist-populist politics, he offers a legitimate record, until recently, of delivering economic growth, helping him amass a base of mostly right-wing supporters.³¹ His base loves him not only because he has lifted many voters out of poverty, but also because he has improved living standards nationwide. For instance, Turkish citizens saw near record low unemployment near 9 percent in 2013.³² Inflation, in the high double digits and often triple digits for decades, fell into the single digits under Erdoğan.

Turkey's potential to become permanently anchored in Europe unleashed an unprecedented flow of foreign direct investment – nearing two percent of Turkey's GDP annually – boosting its economy and Erdoğan's polling numbers. In 2002, his

²⁸ I would like to thank my assistant Reilly Barry for helping draft this article.

²⁹ Soner Çağaptay, "How can Turkey become great?" *Erdogan's Empire: Turkey and the Politics of the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019).

³⁰ Çağaptay, "How can Turkey become great?"

³¹ Soner Çağaptay, "Conservative Islam Meets Capitalism," *The Rise of Turkey: The Twenty-First Century's First Muslim Power*, (Sterling, VA: Potomac Books, 2014), 35-37.

³² "Labor Force Statistics, 2013," Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Hanehalki-Isgucu-Istatistikleri-2013-16015>.

AKP won parliamentary elections with just around one-third of the vote, thanks to the fragmented nature of his opposition. By the 2011 elections, his faction's popularity had skyrocketed to nearly 50 percent.³³

His Falling Fortunes

However, lately Erdoğan faces a key challenge: the Turkish economy has slowed down and Erdoğan's popularity is, accordingly, nosediving. Due to periods of recession and slowing economic growth since 2018 – and beginning with the 2019 Turkish local elections – the president has lost his former popular majority.

There was a time when Erdoğan – whether one liked him or not – represented change in Turkey. The people loved him for his effectiveness and supported him at the ballot box. But today, Erdoğan appears to have lost his magic touch. He no longer represents change in Turkey. Now he stands for the status quo, including problems locked-in by his own errors (e.g. ineffective monetary policy and personal acrimony with global leaders, among others). And the opposition, which has proven resilient, represents change and problem-solving. To put it succinctly, although Erdoğan controls Turkey, he does not lead it anymore.

With establishment fatigue, disenchantment from younger voters, international scrutiny, and a lagging economy – his Achilles heel – he faces more problems now than he ever has before in his tenure in government. The next parliamentary and presidential elections in Turkey, scheduled for 2023, could well deliver a surprise.

Being voted out could well be Erdoğan's deepest fear, given the many enemies he has made. Trouble looms should he exit the presidency. Typically, when Turkish presidents leave office, they retire to a villa in Istanbul, or along the Turkish Riviera, and some even take up hobbies such as painting. Erdoğan must sense his prospects would be grimmer, considering how many of his opponents he has brutalized, starting with the case of the Ergenekon trials of 2008–11.³⁴ He likely would fear a post-presidency darkened by prosecution, or even persecution.

How Will Erdoğan React?

However, Erdoğan knows that he does not have to win the next Turkish parliamentary and presidential elections, currently scheduled for 2023, with 60-70 percent support. Hence his manifold strategy. Firstly, deliver economic growth again – including by launching a charm offensive towards the US and encouraging Foreign Direct Investment flows into the country – in order to re-build his base. And then – and slightly more Machiavellian this time – launch a “full press court” re-election strategy, simultaneously oppressing, overwhelming, and distracting his opponents to peel one percent from the opposition here and one percent there. All this ties into Erdoğan's overall goal at the ballot box: reach 50 percent +1.

As Erdoğan surveys the political landscape, he undoubtedly sees two fundamental options: either embrace democracy and watch an increasingly unfriendly electorate vote him out, or become more authoritarian still, in an attempt to fend off the country's demographic, economic, and political trends. But Erdoğan is a Janus-faced politician, which means he can do both, at least tactically speaking. To this end, the “democratic

³³ “Recep Erdogan wins by landslide in Turkey's general election,” *The Guardian*, June 12, 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jun/13/recep-erdogan-turkey-general-election>.

³⁴ Gareth Jenkins, “The Ergenekon Verdicts: Chronicle of an Injustice Foretold,” *Turkey Analyst*, 6 no. 14 (2013), <http://www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/50>.

reform package” he will likely unveil in 2021 could include the jail release of some civil society activists, to allay fears in the Biden White House and across European capitals over Turkey’s democratic slide. But simultaneously, he will maintain his nativist populist tactics at home. This latter reality, of course, will be deeply unfortunate – and tragic – for marginalized groups such as women, liberals, secularists, leftists, Christians, and the LGBT community.

In pursuing this path, Erdoğan will also be compelled to invent new enemies – domestic and foreign – all to justify further persecuting his opponents and their leaders, starting with the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP). Erdoğan has already jailed Selahattin Demirtaş, the leader of the pro-Kurdish nationalist and progressive alliance HDP, and he might even target the leadership of main-opposition Republican Peoples’ Party (CHP) and others. Overall, and for reasons I explain below, the HDP will bear the brunt of Erdoğan’s demonization strategy.

Boost

To date, Erdoğan’s greatest political achievement, arguably, has been the 2018 move to an executive-style presidency, which resulted in his effective crowning as the first quasi-sultan of Turkey’s second republic. But this switch has also, inadvertently, created Erdoğan’s greatest electoral challenge: a unified opposition.

For a long time, Erdoğan was blessed with a disparate opposition, with various strands representing Turkish and Kurdish nationalists, secularists, and conservatives, among others. The gap between those opposition factions was often wider than the gap separating them from Erdoğan. This, together with the economic growth the Turkish leader delivered until lately, helped him win many successive elections. But the presidential system requires a two-way race, with the winner needing to take more than half the vote, a reality that has forced the opposition to unite. The first such alliance fell short in the 2018 presidential race, but in 2019 opposition mayoral candidate Ekrem İmamoğlu won Istanbul using the same approach, with the full spectrum of Turkey’s opposition rallying behind him.

Now, Erdoğan wants to divide the opposition by boosting splinter opposition parties that appeal to the base of his main opponent, the CHP. Examples include the recently established Movement for Change in Turkey, led by former CHP politician Mustafa Sarıgül, and another new party, launched in early 2021 by CHP figure Muharrem İnce. These blocs have miraculously received much airtime on Erdoğan-backed networks, while other factions, such as those led by Davutoğlu and Babacan, are spurned.³⁵ Whether these parties can capture more than a few percentage points of support is uncertain, but even that could be enough to keep Erdoğan in office.

Ignore Violence Against the Real Opposition

Along these lines, violence against opposition politicians, including a 15 January 2021 mob attack in broad daylight on Future Party vice chair Selçuk Özdağ outside his Ankara home, also deserves attention.³⁶ Coupled with other anti-opposition attacks –

³⁵ See Soner Cagaptay (@SonerCagaptay), “New trend in Turkish politics: faux opposition parties (backed by pro-Erdogan media). While such factions may not garner more than few percent points support, they fit into Erdogan’s overall electoral strategy: Peel 1 % from the opposition here and 1 % there—to get to 50 % + 1,” post on Twitter, February 8, 2021, 11:02 a.m., <https://twitter.com/SonerCagaptay/status/1358808352839581696>.

³⁶ “Dissident Politician and Journalist Severely Beaten in Ankara,” *Arab News*, January 15, 2021, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1793276/middle-east>.

including a lynch mob attempt against main opposition CHP chair Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu during 2019 local elections³⁷ and frequent attacks against HDP offices – a wave of non-lethal ‘low-level’ violence against opposition politicians, opinion makers, and journalists could intimidate the opposition just enough to eke out a victory for Erdoğan in the next elections. Erdoğan does not seek landslide support, rather just a simple majority at the ballot box, and such tactics serve as stepping-stones to this goal.

Choose Between the MHP and İYİ

This all means that Erdoğan’s own party, the AKP, need not be dominant or entirely unified for him to win. In 2001, at its inception, the party included diverse voices and political forces, constituting a heterogeneous bloc of rightist and centrist actors. Still, at its centre were Erdoğan and other politicians from the Turkish National Outlook school of political Islam, such as the Welfare Party (Refah).

During Erdoğan’s first years as prime minister, mirroring his own rise in popularity, support for the AKP increased from 36 percent in 2002 to nearly 50 percent in 2011, leaving him comfortable enough to dispense with non-political-Islamist allies, including business liberals and center-right politicians. Subsequently, by the early 2010s, political Islamists became undeniably dominant within the AKP. In recent years, Erdoğan went so far as to cut ties with even key National Outlook figures such as Abdullah Gül, a fellow AKP member who formerly served as the country’s president.

The AKP is now, sadly, a shell of its old self, peopled by Erdoğan loyalists who have joined the president and his party only in recent years, including many in Erdoğan’s cabinet. When he needs electoral support, the president can turn further to the right-wing Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) and also help build other factions that might benefit from an alliance with his party. Such a move, notably, would prompt an even harder line by Erdoğan on the Kurdish issue both domestically, against the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), and in Syria, against the group’s People’s Protection Units (YPG) offshoot, with the goal of currying favor with MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli and his base.

Yet Erdoğan’s dalliance with the MHP carries its own risks, given that Bahçeli’s hardline nationalism cost the AKP in the Istanbul mayoral vote and that Istanbul is home to millions of Kurdish-speaking voters. Therefore, the Turkish president could opt to turn instead to the more moderately Turkish nationalist Good Party (İYİ) and its leader, Meral Akşener. Such a move, allowing the president to adopt a less strident Turkish nationalist attitude domestically, winning back some Kurdish voters in Istanbul and elsewhere who have abandoned him, could help Erdoğan’s bloc clinch victory at the ballot box.

But this path too will be complicated. When Akşener herself broke away from the MHP in October 2017 to form the İYİ, the split roughly followed pro- and anti-Erdoğan lines inside the MHP. It is therefore unlikely that a majority of İYİ supporters, who despise Erdoğan as much as they like Akşener, would follow her should she enter an electoral alliance with the president.

³⁷ “Turkey: Is Mob Violence Undermining Democracy?” *Deutsche Welle*, May 3, 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/turkey-is-mob-violence-undermining-democracy/a-48598883>.

Demonize the HDP in order to Get IYI on Board

In the short term, this leaves Erdoğan with the hardline MHP as his key electoral ally, unless of course he can somehow convince Akşener's base that the IYI is allied with 'terrorists', prompting Akşener to quit the opposition bloc. To this end, Erdoğan will demonize the HDP in order to make it too costly for IYI leader Akşener to stay in the same opposition block with the HDP, however informally. Accordingly, Erdoğan has recently lashed out at HDP leaders, tagging jailed HDP head Selahattin Demirtaş as a 'terrorist' who "has the blood of thousands of Kurds on his hands".³⁸

Turkish politics has historically been disproportionately right-wing dominated. Parties on the right have led government in the country for all but 17 months since 1950, excluding four years spent under military rule, following the coups of 1960, 1973, and 1980. Akşener's faction is the only significant member of the opposition block challenging Erdoğan. If she leaves the opposition, Erdoğan wins.

Engage in New Conflicts

Erdoğan wants to play safe and will simultaneously try to boost his base by engaging in new foreign policy ventures, reminding voters of his strongman image globally, as he did in late 2020 when Ankara boosted support to its ally Azerbaijan against Armenia in the South Caucasus as well as launching new campaigns against PKK and its affiliates in Iraq and Syria, moves that would all receive significant support from both sides of the political aisle. Not even the possibility of a dogfight with Greece, a skirmish with Turkey's smaller neighbors, such as Cyprus – driven by Turkish natural gas drilling activity off the Cypriot coast, or a fresh Turkish incursion into Syria targeting the YPG – should be ruled out. These could all be means to solidify his right-wing base and divert attention from troubles at home. The combination of such distractions with Turkey's real foreign policy concerns, stretching all across the region, could likewise help the Turkish president broaden his national security constituency.

Exert Even More Pressure on Opposition Factions

At the same time and in order to contain democratic opposition within Turkey, Erdoğan will further limit freedoms of assembly, association, media, and expression. To this end, the AKP-led Turkish parliament passed a sweeping social media bill on July 29, 2020, giving Erdoğan unbridled power to control social media content across a wide variety of platforms.³⁹ This law requires platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to appoint Turkey-based representatives to be subservient to government authorities and meet deadlines for removal of content deemed inappropriate by the state.⁴⁰ For a country with 13 million Twitter users, and given that the vast majority of domestic media outlets are under the state's hand, this is not only a repudiation of freedom of expression, but a means of further limiting Turkish citizens' access to basic information – a right already stretched thin.

The social media legislation is a grave omen with possibly monumental consequences. Even before the law's enactment, Turkey issued more Twitter content-removal requests than any other country, so the law's passage intimates a dire

³⁸ Ece Toksabay and Daren Butler, "Erdoğan Slams Jailed Kurdish Leader, Fuelling Scepticism About Reform Pledge," *Reuters*, November 25, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-turkey-politics-demirtas-idUKKBN28518F>.

³⁹ "Turkey's New Social Media Law Put into Effect," *Hurriyet Daily News*, July 31, 2020, <https://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/turkeys-new-social-media-law-put-into-effect-157029>.

⁴⁰ "Turkey's New Social Media Law Put into Effect."

clampdown on free expression.⁴¹ Erdoğan knows this bill can affect his entire opposition, not just a segment or two. In a blatant recent move against a new rival, Erdoğan in summer 2020 ordered the closure of Istanbul Sehir University, which was established by ally-turned-opponent Ahmet Davutoğlu, founder in late December 2019 of the Gelecek (Future) Party.⁴² Davutoğlu has embraced freedom of speech as a core ideological tenet and blamed Erdoğan for its demise under his leadership.

And Move Goalposts Further for the Opposition

Similarly, Erdoğan will likely use his control of the legislature to enact a new electoral law, moving the goalpost yet farther for the opposition. Turkey has one of the highest electoral thresholds of any democracy, requiring parties to garner 10 percent of the popular vote to enter parliament. In the last parliamentary elections, in 2018, however, smaller opposition parties that formed electoral coalitions with the CHP, İYİ formally, and Saadet and the pro-Kurdish nationalist and progressive HDP informally, and on a constituency-by-constituency basis were able to bypass this requirement thanks to their combined vote percentage. What is more, this opposition alliance famously denied Erdoğan's candidates a victory in the 2019 mayoral elections.

Realizing this, Erdoğan is seeking to implement stricter measures to put a stop to additional smaller parties boosting the strength of the opposition block. New legislation could require parties in electoral alliances to pass a new and additional threshold of 5-7 percent individually to be represented in the parliament.⁴³ It is unlikely that smaller parties, such as Saadet (SP, also known as Felicity), former foreign minister and prime minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's Gelecek (Future), and Democracy and Progress Party (DEVA) led by former AKP finance minister Ali Babacan, and perhaps even the HDP, would pass this threshold as single entities.

While negotiations between Erdoğan and his ally MHP leader Bahçeli continue as of early 2021, it is certain that whatever legislation Erdoğan passes through the country's parliament to this end will benefit his AKP and the MHP, barring these smaller opposition factions from the parliament, and undermining the overall strength of the anti-Erdoğan opposition. In fact, Bahçeli may be the clincher of this legislative deal, as his faction's support to Erdoğan's AKP provides the Turkish president's party with a majority in the parliament. This means any legislation Bahçeli consents to with regards to the new electoral law or other changes will have to be so fine-tuned, gerrymandered, and hocus-pocus that it would – simultaneously – cripple his nemeses İYİ and HDP at the ballot box, blocking their path to the parliament, while not having a similar effect on Bahçeli's similarly-small faction.

Conclusion

Economic and political trends may be working against Erdoğan, but if precedent holds, he will do whatever it takes to remain Turkey's president. He will do all he can to prevent the opposition from voting him out, even though numbers will work against

⁴¹ "Turkey's President Cracks Down on Social Media," *Economist*, August 8, 2020, <https://www.economist.com/europe/2020/08/06/turkeys-president-cracks-down-on-social-media>.

⁴² "Erdoğan orders shutdown of Istanbul university linked to former ally Davutoğlu," *Ahval*, June 30, 2020, <https://ahvalnews.com/istanbul-sehir-universitesi/erdogan-orders-shutdown-istanbul-universitesi-linked-former-ally-davutoglu>.

⁴³ "Abdulkadir Selvi: İttifak Halinde Giren Partiler için Secim Barajının Yüzde 12 Olması Secenegi," *Diken*, January 7, 2021, <http://www.diken.com.tr/abdulkadir-selvi-ittifak-halinde-giren-partiler-icin-secim-barajinin-yuzde-12-olmasi-secenegi/>.

him at the polls, which means increased oppression before, during, and after the elections. Barring a surprise peaceful transfer of power, he will likely unleash significantly sharper waves of political and ideological repression to maintain control.

Erdoğan's next challenge will be to contain the seemingly uncontrollable forces arrayed against him, rooted in the country's domestic opposition. In response, an era of intensified authoritarianism and nativist populism, already pervasive in the country, will emerge that is unprecedented even in the context of the recent Erdoğan years.

One of the things that makes Erdoğan such an intriguing object of study is his ability to beat the odds. Can he survive the Covid pandemic, economic crisis, a resilient opposition, demographic challenges, and multiple wars? In writing this, I make the case for his probable survival, however at unfortunate and saddening costs to Turkey's citizens, institutions, and allies.



The Turkish Economy: Autumn 2021

by

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This report follows the volatile macro and economic policy trends over the past twelve months, the ongoing Covid policy response, the possible impact of the EU carbon tax on Turkish exports, and also the remarkable growth of the IT (Information Technology), e-commerce, start-up sector which is seeing Turkey generate its first 'Unicorns'.

No place for Central Bank governors

In the past five years, Turkey has had four Central Bank (CBT) governors and associated periodic sharp Lira fluctuations. In November 2020, after the erosion of \$130bn of foreign exchange (FX) reserves in a futile attempt to stabilise the currency, the CBT governor Murat Uysal was dismissed. He was replaced by the experienced hand of Naci Ağbal who promptly tightened monetary policy. Ağbal's appointment along with the resignation of Berat Albayrak, the Treasury and Finance Minister, stabilised the currency and improved confidence that the government was "starting to face the facts", as *The Economist* remarked.⁴⁴

But, it was not for long. The expected decline in inflation failed to appear in view of the strong domestic demand recovery in the second half of 2020. In response, Ağbal opted for another 200 basis point interest rate rise in March 2021 taking the policy rate to 19%. This strengthened the Lira to below TL7/US\$ (mostly due to dollars 'under the mattress' being exchanged for Lira, see below), and brought a chorus of objections from exporters who warned of loss of export markets. A few days later – after only four

⁴⁴ *The Economist*, 'Turkey's Economy on the Edge', 21 November 2020.

months as CBT governor, Ađbal was sacked.⁴⁵ This triggered a sharp decline in the Lira that further increased inflationary pressures.

Over this five-year period, inflation has risen from around 10% per year to close to 20% – the highest in major emerging markets. But, in fact, it may be higher. Confidence in the inflation statistics, as with confidence in the CBT and other policy institutions has fallen dramatically. Moreover, the new CBT governor, řahap Kavcıođlu, seems in no hurry to raise interest rates as seen in August when inflation surpassed the policy rate. The government has responded to the acceleration in inflation with more ad-hoc, administrative measures, and another Presidential commission: the Price Stability Committee. The aim of the Committee is to manage the supply side shocks to prices due to the Covid related international disruptions to supply chains. While there is an on-going supply side inflation shock associated with covid globally, this initiative is also very much in line with the overall approach of the current policy team that the problems facing the Turkish economy are mostly externally generated.

The economic growth imperative

The travails of Turkish monetary policy reflects the political troubles of the AKP regime. Since losing power in major cities in the 2019 local authority elections, the political imperative of economic growth to maintain the allegiance of the core-AKP/MHP supporters has shaped the government's economic policy. This year's reshuffles of several ministerial heads, the CBT, the state banks, Turkey Wealth Fund, and the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) seems to have brought in more ideological and less technocratic figures to shape economic policy.

In 2020, the Turkish Covid support policy was an outlier among most emerging markets in its heavy reliance on banking sector credits. With 36% credit growth, the Turkish economy had "one of the largest credit expansions that the world saw in 2020", mostly led by state banks, that also delivered a 1.8% GDP growth.⁴⁶ In contrast, the public sector deficit was 7.4% of GDP – almost half the 13% of GDP deficit that was the average for the G-20.

Due to base effects, GDP growth in the second quarter was 21.7% on one year ago when the economy shrank 10.4%. This resulted in a first half of 2021 growth of 14.3%. In the second half of this year, GDP growth is expected moderate as credit growth is reined in. There was a major brake on consumer credits by state banks from June onwards as well as other restrictions on credit card borrowing. This is likely to be partly offset by increased fiscal support for covid related hardship with the total package – including loan guarantees and credit and tax payment deferrals, expected to amount to an estimated 12% of GDP. Thus, even taking into account a slower second half and the negative impact of the drought hit agriculture, GDP growth



⁴⁵ Also precipitating the firing was Ađbal ordering an internal CBT report on the loss of Central Bank foreign currency reserves. See *Reuters*, 'The last straw: why an irked Erdoğan fired Turkey's Central Bank chief', 31 March 2021.

⁴⁶ World Bank, *Turkey Economic Monitor*, April 2021.

of around 7-8% looks possible. This growth performance, including the recent 27% wage hike for blue-collar workers in the civil service, suggests pre-election pump priming of the economy giving rise to increasing speculation of early elections in 2022. But this performance has had and continues to have a high price: accelerating inflation, the currency roller-coaster, and precariously low FX reserves. Nor has the chase after growth had a positive impact on the labour market. The share of wages in GDP that has been on a declining trend in recent years is now under 30%. Unemployment remains high at over 10% with youth unemployment three times that. The historically low labour force participation ratio recovered somewhat to around 50% at mid-2021 but is yet to return to pre-pandemic levels with a major factor being women dropping out of the labour force. The Covid related decline in the tourism sector which provides 8% of employment is another factor that will hold back job recovery. Added to this is the doldrums of the construction and retail sectors. In retail, half of the 400 AVM (shopping centres – Alışveriş Merkezi) that provided one million jobs pre-Covid are now reported to be struggling to pay their rents and foreign currency debts. There is also the impact on the labour market of the around five million refugees from the Middle East and Central Asia. This is yet to be properly measured but reports suggest that labour intensive sectors such as agriculture and textiles have had a shot-in the arm from the availability of the refugee work force. However, given the high levels of existing domestic unemployment, this is creating a major political backlash.

Current account deficit likely to narrow on strong exports

Inevitably, this policy mix and the 65% collapse of tourism revenues widened the current account deficit (CAD) to 5.1% of GDP in 2020; the foreign debt relative to GDP rose to almost 60%. The CAD is expected to narrow in 2021 with an improvement in exports and tourism receipts and the decline in gold imports. Exports have reached the \$200bn mark for the first time in June 2021 led by the four-horsemen of Turkish export sectors: automotive, chemicals, textiles and clothing, and iron and steel. Exports have benefited from the Covid disruption of supply chains in Asia, some of which were redirected to Turkey. This included the textiles and clothing sector making Turkey the world's 4th biggest clothing exporter so far this year, behind China, Vietnam and Bangladesh.

Also helping manage the foreign payments gap are the various swap arrangements agreed with major trade partners such as those with Qatar, China, and a new local currency swap worth 2.3 trillion Won (\$2bn) agreed in August with South Korea. Official FX reserves were also boosted by the increased allocation of IMF's Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) that added \$6.3bn in August.

'Under the pillow' gold & FX reserves provide cushion against currency volatility

Local business has its own methods of protecting against currency volatility: savings held in the informal economy. Mahfi Eğinmez, an economist and former Undersecretary of the Treasury, suggests a conservative estimate of "under the pillow" gold & foreign currency savings of around \$300bn based on reports by the World Gold Council and the Istanbul Gold Refinery.⁴⁷ The existence of these reserves periodically prompts President Erdoğan to urge the public to put their under-the-pillow savings into "the system" with another recent plea in March following the Lira crash due to the sacking of CBT governor Ağbal. But there was little response.

⁴⁷ Mahfi Eğinmez, 'Kayıt veya Sistem dışı Döviz ve Altınlar', *Kendime Yazılar*, 23 February 2021.

These reserves may help cushion against a major crisis, but they do not help move the economy forward. The depletion of official FX reserves and the onerous repayment schedule on the foreign debt keeps Turkish country risk high. Thus, interest rates at which the government and business can borrow abroad have remained high preventing Turkey from fully benefiting from the historically low international rates. Despite the difficult 2020, private sector was a net-repayer of foreign debt by about \$17bn for the third year, reducing its long-term foreign debt from a peak of \$220bn in 2017 to \$164bn. But, short-term debt remains elevated suggesting declining willingness of international creditors to make long-term commitments to Turkey.

Drought, wildfires, and the EU carbon tax

Despite the apparent strength of economic growth data, this year has seen sharp evidence of environmental degradation and climate change in Turkey: the severe drought, the widespread wildfires, and the floods in the Black Sea coast. The drought has affected many parts of Anatolia, including Turkey's bread-basket, the Konya plain, and led to exceptional decline in water storage levels in reservoirs around Istanbul. The economic cost of these is already evident in the 25% rise in food prices so far this year.

The government has been criticised for its inadequate response to these natural disasters. It is yet to sign the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, holding out (understandably) for more financial assistance as a late-industrialising, still urbanising economy with per capita energy consumption a fraction of those in the advanced economies.⁴⁸ But, this year has brought increased awareness that Turkey's transition to a greener economy can no longer be delayed. Looming as a major economic challenge is the EU carbon tax as part of the EU's 'Fit for 55' green agenda that will come into operation in January 2026 after a three-year transition period that starts in 2023. A carbon tax will be levied on imports of highly polluting sectors such as cement, aluminium, fertilisers, electricity, iron and steel, and electricity generation. According to a study by the think-tank, TEPAV (Economic Policy Research Foundation), Turkey is in third place after Russia and China in terms of the vulnerability of its exports to the EU in these sectors.⁴⁹

A 'Green Deal Action Plan 2021' has now been released by the Ministry of Trade which aims to establish compliance with the EU Green Deal to try to minimise the disruption to Turkish exports. A few decades ago, as advanced economies de-industrialised and moved into light and high-tech industry, Turkish industry's global niche role had become one of a producer of heavy (polluting) industries. This will have to change. The question is if Turkish industry can transition into technologies that reduce its carbon emissions given the short span of time, and how is it to be paid for? There is less than two years to work this out and only another three years to make the transition.

Turkish industry has been here before in 1994 when it had to adopt the EU quality standards as Turkey joined the EU Customs Union. That forced many industries to improve their quality standards, but many also failed. For the latter, diversifying exports

⁴⁸ Turkey is in the "developed world" category in the Paris accord (this differs from Turkey's UN categorisation), and hence does not qualify for financial assistance to reach net-Zero targets which is expected to cost an estimated \$50bn in investment.

⁴⁹ Güven Sak, 'Sanayi Politikası yoksa Yeşil mutabakat şoku şiddetli olur', *TEPAV*, 1 September 2021.

to the Middle East and Central Asia provided some remedy. Today, the government seems partly resigned to the fact that export growth to the EU will become more difficult and is aiming to further diversify Turkey's export markets and products, including services exports such as international contracting, tourism and health. The plan is to expand Turkey's average export range beyond its current 2,500 km (the example of South Korea is given that sends its exports 8,000 km) according to the new Minister of Trade Mehmet Muş.⁵⁰ This expanded range also includes exports to the US which have been growing rapidly since the agreement under the Trump presidency to raise mutual trade volume to \$100bn – although this could be somewhat hindered by the CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act) sanctions that came into effect in April 2021.

Manufacturing investment revival and the emergence of Turkish 'unicorns'

In conclusion, this report will also cover some positive trends in the economy that shows its resilience. The first half 2021 data shows a significant increase in investment in machinery and equipment which had been stagnating since 2014 as private sector investment focused on construction and real-estate. Business has responded to the rapid rebound in export markets this year by re-tooling and increasing production capacity by taking advantage of the ample credit availability. Leading sectors tapping investment incentives were, not surprisingly, health products, household chemicals (detergents etc) and protective textiles.

There is also a notable rise in e-commerce. As seen all over the world, the Covid lockdowns have turbo-charged e-commerce and other ICT (information and communications technologies) activities in Turkey which has seen its first 'unicorns' (start-up firms whose values have reached \$1bn) emerge such as Trendyol, and Getir. Added to this is Peak Games and Dream Games suggesting Turkish creatives have established a foot-hold in the gaming industry. It is thought that a threshold of sorts may have been reached given the high numbers of mobile phone subscribers and other indicators such as 37 million FaceBook users (compared with 38 million in the UK). The share of on-line retail in total is estimated to have more than doubled to 15% this year from 6.2% at end-2019 according to TÜBISAD, the Turkish Informatics Industry Association.

This is attracting new investors with \$1.3bn of investments into start-ups in the first half of 2021 surpassing the \$736m of investment made over the past ten-years.⁵¹ There is a wide range of domestic and foreign investors. The latter include China's Alibaba's investments in Trendyol. While the political problems of China's tech-giants may mean this may not last, there may be more mileage from domestic investors that include investment arms of established Turkish conglomerates such as Vestel Ventures of Vestel, Inventram of Koç Holding, Yıldız Ventures of Yahya Ülker, and Oyak Group.

These developments have come as Asian firms – South Korea's Samsung and China's Xiaomi – are starting to produce mobile phones in Turkey. Xiaomi already has 26% of the market and is in joint venture with Finland's Salcomp which produces the batteries and spare parts for the phones. Apparently, Turkey has high reserves of

⁵⁰ "Bakan Muş: İhracat'a 'e-Turquality' dopingi geliyor", *Dünya*, 1 September 2021.

⁵¹ "Selenay Yağcı, 'Türkiye'de 10 unicorn yola çıkmaya hazırlanıyor', *Dünya*, 26 July 2021

lithium necessary for batteries (including for electric cars) that is mined jointly with boron, another rare mineral of which there are ample stocks in Anatolia.

The question is can it be sustained? Twenty years ago there was another burst of activity in the ICT sector. Several internet providers (ISPs) were set up by established holding groups in the late 1990s and there was much interest in the expected privatisation of Türk Telekom and the sale of mobile phone licences. But the bursting of the US Dot-com bubble and the Turkish financial and payments crisis of 2000-01 devastated many entities. Despite a rapid economic recovery during its first term, the AKP government failed to establish the conditions for the emergence of e-commerce or telecom giants and industry was unable to transform into a higher technology structure. The AKP has had since 2011 an industrial policy aiming for a technological transformation offering major incentives to investments in the ICT sector – and this has supported the current breakthrough. But, given the volatile economic and political environment, and the traditional fragility of this sector with a high churn-rate of entry and exit of enterprises, there is a high risk that this trend could fizzle out as did the earlier one twenty years ago.

Conclusion

The past five years has seen extreme volatility in the Turkish economy similar to the 1990s which also had a highly fragmented and paralysed political scene. Then, as now, state institutions regulating and directing economic policy had been progressively weakened and politicised. Then, as now, state banks were being stretched to fund political patronage networks and many off-budget spending channels had reduced fiscal transparency. In contrast, the extensive powers of the current presidential system are very different to the feuding short-run multi-party coalition governments of the 1990s. But it too seems unable to deliver on macro-economic stability.

While the AKP has proven it can deliver big infrastructural projects (the construction of the Sazlıdere Bridge, the first of six on the Canal Istanbul project was initiated in June) the institutional and policy coherence needed for a transformative policy has been missing. Macro-economic policy has become more incoherent as evident in the ever-shorter tenures of the CBT governors, rising inflation, heavy reliance on state-banks' balance sheets, the dollarisation of the economy, and the erosion of official foreign currency reserves. Moreover, the outlook for the current period seems more precarious than in the late 1990s when the 2001 crisis brought together a wide political alliance to pursue radical reforms in the context of international support and the prospect of EU membership. The latter is no longer likely nor that attractive. Today, Turkey seems more isolated with strained relations with many of its old allies. In addition, the AKP's rejection of the option of IMF assistance increases the vulnerability of the economy in the event of an international financial crisis. This is a very real risk as the US Federal Reserve begins to withdraw Covid-related stimulus, towards the end of this year. However, despite the governance problems at the centre, the recent growth in the ICT sector shows that Turkish economy's underlying resilience and dynamism can persist – albeit in a highly fragmented way.



Update on Cyprus

Varosha: Why Is It So Important?



by **Peter Millett**

High Commissioner to Cyprus (2005 to 2010)

British Ambassador to Jordan (2011 to 2015)

British Ambassador to Libya (2015 to 2018)

The town of Varosha has been in the headlines in recent weeks, following the Turkish Cypriot announcement that part of it was being opened up. This step sparked a fierce reaction from the Greek Cypriots. The move is a major setback for the hopes of a settlement to the long-standing division of the island. This article explores why Varosha matters.

History

Varosha – known as Maraş in Turkish – lies to the south of Famagusta on the east coast of Cyprus. It was the suburb of the famous trading port where the Greek Cypriots lived. The walled city was mainly Turkish Cypriot while Varosha and the area outside the walls had a Greek Cypriot majority.

In the 1960s it became one of the first parts of Cyprus to be developed for tourism. Its long sandy beach was lined with hotels and many Greek Cypriots built holiday homes there. It attracted foreign tourists and became known as a playground for celebrities such as Richard Burton, Elizabeth Taylor, and Sophia Loren. New hotels were springing up in the early 1970s as tourism and international travel grew.



The Turkish invasion in 1974 led to the evacuation of the Greek Cypriots as the Turkish army took control of Famagusta. Approximately 31,200 Greek Cypriots fled south to rapidly constructed refugee camps. Varosha was fenced off by the Turkish army and only the army and the UN peace-keeping force were allowed to enter.

Over the years, talks to find a settlement foundered and the city became a ghost town. Greek Cypriots could only watch from the nearby village of Deryneia as their abandoned homes slowly succumbed to the ravages of time and nature took back the streets of their town. Occasional visits by journalists revealed images of a town trapped in time: crumbling walls, collapsing staircases, abandoned washing waving in the breeze, shops whose dusty shelves stocked only rusted cans and rotten produce, and a beach front lined by hollowed-out hotels.

The United Nations Security Council made clear its condemnation of the Turkish invasion. Resolution 367 in March 1975 called upon all States to respect the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus, and regretted the unilateral decision of 13 February 1975 declaring that a part of the Republic of Cyprus would become 'a Federated Turkish State'.

When Rauf Denktaş declared the “Turkish Cypriot Republic of Northern Cyprus” in 1983, the Security Council (UNSCR 541) “deplored the declaration of the Turkish Cypriot authorities of the purported secession of part of the Republic of Cyprus and considered that declaration to be legally invalid.” On the occupation of Varosha, UNSCR 550 of 11 May 1984 stated that the Security Council: “Considers attempts to settle any part of Varosha by people other than its inhabitants as inadmissible and calls for the transfer of that area to the administration of the United Nations.” Under the Annan Plan of 2004, Varosha would have become part of the Greek Cypriot constituent state and therefore returned to its Greek Cypriot owners. As is well-known, the plan was rejected by the Greek Cypriots in the referendum but accepted by the Turkish Cypriots. A similar transfer of territory was on the table at the talks that culminated at Crans Montana in 2017.

In 2010 the European Court of Human Rights awarded damages to a group of Greek Cypriots for being deprived of their homes. Some of the relevant properties were in Varosha. The court ruled that Turkey had violated the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights relating to the right of peaceful enjoyment of one’s possessions.

Recent Developments

Since 2017 the Turkish Cypriot authorities have started to open Varosha to the civilian population of the north. This process escalated with the rise to power of Ersin Tatar. He became ‘Prime Minister’ in 2019 and announced that his government planned to open Varosha by the end of the following year.

This intention to open Varosha became part of Tatar’s election campaign for the ‘Presidency’ of the north. The opening of Varosha was supported publicly by President Erdoğan as part of the Turkish government’s efforts to back Tatar’s campaign. President Erdoğan visited Varosha on 6 October 2020 and demonstrated his support for Tatar’s nationalist agenda. Two days later the area of Varosha from the Officers’ Club to the Golden Sands Hotel was opened to the public. The United Nations made clear its concern about this move, demanded its reversal and called for respect for Security Council resolutions.

Two weeks later Tatar won the election and became the ‘President of the TRNC’ and the lead representative in the UN-led talks on the future of the island. His declared approach was to abandon the traditional concept of a bizonal bicomunal federation, which he said had failed to deliver a result. He insisted on a two-state solution with separate Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot states, both having their own separate sovereignty and membership of the European Union.

Tatar took this position to the meeting in Geneva with President Anastasiades and UN Secretary General Guterres in April this year. “Nobody should expect us to be patched onto a unitary, single state. We are negotiating for a two-state solution,” Tatar said. Guterres concluded the meeting by stating that there was not enough common ground to restart negotiations: “Unfortunately today we are not able to reach the agreements that we would wish to reach, but we are not going to give up.”

The UN Security Council made clear its opposition to the opening of Varosha. In a Presidential Statement on 23 July, the Council said that it “condemns the announcement in Cyprus by Turkish and Turkish Cypriot leaders on 20 July 2021 on the further reopening of a part of the fenced-off area of Varosha. The Security Council expresses its deep regret regarding these unilateral actions that run contrary to its previous resolutions and statements.” The Council called for the immediate reversal

of all steps taken on Varosha since October 2020 and reaffirmed the status of Varosha set out in resolution 550, including the line that any attempt to settle any part of Varosha by people other than its inhabitants is inadmissible.

The EU joined this condemnation. High Representative Josep Borrell tweeted: “The unilateral decision announced today by Erdoğan and Tatar risks raising tensions on the island, compromising return to talks on a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus issue.”

The UK, a Guarantor Power, issued a statement calling on all parties not to take any actions which undermine the Cyprus settlement process or increase tensions on the island. For the Labour Party, shadow Minister Fabian Hamilton, told The Guardian: “This move is in blatant violation of existing UN resolutions on Cyprus. To announce it on the anniversary of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus is needlessly provocative and will only further division on the island.”

In August, the government of the Republic announced that it would revoke the passports of 14 Turkish Cypriot officials who had taken hostile action over Varosha. It is understood that a number of Turkish Cypriot officials, including Tatar, hold Republic of Cyprus passports. In response, the bi-communal group Unite Cyprus Now commented: “While the Turkish Cypriot leader and the coalition supported by Turkey are clearly violating the UN Security Council resolutions by attempting to open the fenced city of Varosha under the Turkish Cypriot administration, the Greek Cypriot leadership has responded by revoking the Republic of Cyprus passports of certain Turkish Cypriots, including the Turkish Cypriot leader and his administration. The Cyprus problem has legal, political, economic and sociological dimensions. Tit for tat repercussions will eventually hurt all Cypriots. We deserve a united future based on cooperation and empathy. What is needed to get there is a genuine commitment to the solution of the Cyprus problem in line with the UN Security Council Resolutions and previous convergences.”

Why Varosha Matters

Varosha clearly belongs to the Greek Cypriots, despite the claim of the Turkish Cypriot religious foundation, EVKAF, that Varosha historically belongs to them. Prior to the Turkish invasion in 1974, the area was primarily populated by Greek Cypriots who had their houses, flats, holiday homes, schools, churches and other community activities in the suburb. They also developed the hotels, restaurants and other successful tourist attractions.

It has long been seen as a major bargaining chip for the Turkish Cypriots, a major concession which ensured that they would get something significant in return. Up to now, it was accepted by the Turks and Turkish Cypriots that, once a settlement had been agreed and backed by referendums on both sides, Varosha would be one of the first areas to be transferred back to its original Greek Cypriot owners. Indeed, if the Greek Cypriots, as well as the Turkish Cypriots had voted in favour of the Annan Plan, Varosha would by now be a thriving tourist resort again. Even outside the formal negotiations on territory, Varosha was the subject of attempts to generate Confidence Building Measures, such as allowing Greek Cypriot surveyors and architects into the area to make plans for the eventual return and reconstruction of the buildings and hotels. This step could have been matched by steps by the Greek Cypriots to allow the use of Ercan, the airport in the north, for direct flights to European destinations.

The change of position of Ersin Tatar and the support he receives from Erdoğan is a direct provocation to the Greek Cypriots and makes the chances of re-opening a dialogue on a Cyprus settlement even more remote. It touches a raw nerve with all Greek Cypriots, politicians and public alike, who rightly see their property being exploited to make a political point. The step also generates mistrust between the communities and makes reconciliation harder. Moreover, Tatar's position is unrealistic: the prospects of a two-state solution are remote. The Greek Cypriots are even less likely to abandon the bizonal bicomunal federation and embrace a two-state solution without the transfer of Varosha. If the Greek Cypriots do not accept a two-state solution, neither Athens nor London would do so. Nor would the EU or UN.

It is of course possible that Tatar is taking these steps on Varosha as a negotiating ploy. But so far he has shown no sign of willingness to engage in a discussion, let alone a negotiation. And the views in the Greek Cypriot community do not lend themselves towards reconciliation or compromise. If the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot authorities think they can open Varosha as part of the 'TRNC' or as a Turkish enclave, they will have to dig deep and face enormous financial consequences: the investment needed to rebuild the town to its full tourist potential will soon be outweighed by the volume of lawsuits they will face in Cypriot and international courts.

The tragedy is that the opening of Varosha has shifted the narrative on the 'Cyprus Problem' towards the extremes, giving full expression to the hard-liners on both sides. The political atmosphere on both sides is now largely negative. The irony is that Varosha could be a bridge between the two communities, a place where they could work together to build Famagusta and Varosha as a prime tourist destination, thereby unlocking massive economic benefits for both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriots.

The short-term solution would be to hand over the area to the UN, as specified by the Security Council many years ago, and allow the joint surveying and planning of the regeneration of Famagusta and Varosha for the future benefit of both communities. This would help to build trust, confidence and hope.

Conclusion

In 2008 I was permitted to enter Varosha in my role as British High Commissioner. As we were escorted round the central area, it felt as though we had stepped back in time. The silent, empty streets had an eerie, unsettling feel to them. Old-fashioned advertisements for Barclays Bank, Shell and Castrol placed us unmistakably in the 1970s. But time had not stood still: nature had gradually reclaimed the town. Weeds grew freely through the streets and inside the decaying buildings, flourishing in the sunlight penetrating through now roofless homes, sprouting through the floors of deserted classrooms. The beachfront is now watched over by hotel buildings that appear like eyeless monsters, having lost their windows.



We called on the small group of UN peace-keepers, young soldiers from Croatia. They had the whole beach to themselves and had set up beach volley ball and other activities to pass the time. They were frustrated by being on a glorious beach in the Mediterranean but with none of the night-life that they had anticipated from being sent to such a beautiful location.

The current state of the town and the way it is being exploited for political expediency is a sad symbol of the division of Cyprus: abandoned and largely forgotten by the world and used by the two communities to score points, generate animosity and destroy confidence. Reversing that trend is in the hands of the communities' leaders.



A Geostrategic Vision of Turkish Foreign Policy in Eurasia



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The international politics of the 20th century has been turned upside down by unexpected events with global implications during the first two decades of the 21st century. In 2001, the 9/11 terrorist attacks put Islam on the agenda of international politics. This shaped the relations between the West and the Muslim world, and the West and the Middle East in particular. One year later, when the pro-Islamic AKP (Justice and Development Party) came to power in Turkey, a country perceived as the historical bastion of Western secularism in the Muslim world, alarm bells were sent ringing in international affairs.⁵² The AKP's political survival was not predicted. Meanwhile, international politics has been ruptured again by the global pandemic of Covid-19 since 2020. The post-pandemic international order has uncertainties that will have political implications for the future of Turkey's domestic and foreign policies.

Turkish foreign policy is constrained by geostrategy. Historically, the best example is the role of the Straits. Geostrategy is determined by the subjective vision of the leaders relating to the strategy required to achieve certain political goals. In this article, I argue that Turkey's Eurasian orientation is not a grand strategy designed by the AKP leaders. It is rather the continuation of the policies of previous governments to search for an alternative vision according to the changing post-Cold War international relations.

Throughout the 20th century Turkey's vision was to establish pro-Western alliances (the Council of Europe, NATO and EU) and follow a European/Western path.⁵³ Within the East-West ideological divide of the Cold War, successive Ankara governments, irrespective of their political or ideological outlook, overlooked Turkey's place in Eurasia. It was the end of the Cold War era that provided new opportunities to diversify Turkey's pro-Western policies and search for alternative regional alliances. On the one hand, the bi-polar world order was replaced by a multi-polar international system, within

⁵² Ayla Göl, 'The Identity of Turkey: Muslim and Secular', *Third World Quarterly*, 30:4 (2009), p 795.

⁵³ In this article the terms 'Europe and the West' have been used interchangeably, but the West includes both Europe and US.

which Eurasia emerged as a new region. On the other hand, the post-Cold War era created new challenges and opportunities for increasing Turkey's sphere of influence in the South Caucasus and the Turkic Republics of Central Asia. Since the 1990s, different governments in Ankara have utilized the rise of Eurasia to pursue different goals and promote Turkey's cultural, social, economic and political interests in the post-Soviet space.

The Legacy of post-Cold War politics

The building blocks of Turkey's Eurasian vision were laid in the 1990s, and later AKP governments were able to benefit from this. Turkey, under the leadership of Turgut Özal, who was Prime Minister (1983-1989) and then President (1989-1993), had initiated discussions on cultural and social ties with the Turkic Republics in Central Asia and South Caucasus. The collapse of the Soviet Union not only heralded the end of the Cold War and bipolar world order but also initiated a tectonic shift in Eurasian affairs. One of Özal's ambitions was to realize a 'Turkic age' that resembled the expansionist policies of the Ottoman Empire. Many scholars argued that Ankara's renewed 'cultural' ties with Turkic Republics have steered a shift in pro-Western rhetoric and foreign policy orientation towards Eurasia, specifically Central Asia, the Caucasus and Russia since the 1990s.⁵⁴ Turkey's engagement has brought new opportunities, ranging from regional security and trade to cultural and energy issues, by pursuing cooperation and regional power alliances.

This undoubtedly raised concerns about a renewal of 'pan-Turkism' and 'neo-Ottomanism' even before the AKP leadership revived the idea in a new century.⁵⁵ Özal's expansionist vision was never achieved, partly because of his premature death and partly due to Turkey's limited economic power despite its cultural gravity. Hence, an emerging 'Turkic age' never went beyond the dreams of pan-Turkism and was doomed to failure. Nevertheless, several projects in the development of energy, transport and transit networks commenced in the post-Cold War era.⁵⁶ In particular, Özal's initiatives put Eurasian energy on Turkey's agenda. His successor, Tansu Çiller (Prime Minister between 1993-96 and then Foreign Minister 1996-97), initiated the geostrategic vision of making Turkey an 'energy hub' at the crossroads of East-West, and North-South energy corridors, which laid the building blocks for successor governments, including the AKP.⁵⁷

Çiller's successor, Ismail Cem (Ministry of Culture in 1995 and Foreign Minister 1997–2002), originally proposed the notion of 'Avrasya' (Eurasia). In line with the changing post-Cold War politics, Cem's initiatives aimed placing Turkey at the heart of a 'geography of civilizations'. His vision explored how Turkey's geostrategic location could be utilized for it to become a 'world state', and this laid the groundwork for the

⁵⁴ B. Aras, *The New Geopolitics of Eurasia and Turkey's Position* (London: Frank Cass, 2002); B. Aras and H. Fidan, 'Turkey and Eurasia: frontiers of a new geographic imagination', *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 40 (2009), pp.193-215; A. Çeçen, *Türkiye ve Avrasya: Türkiye'nin Stratejik Arayışları*, (Istanbul: Doğu Kütüphanesi, 2015); E. Erşen and S. Köstem, (ed.), 'Turkey's Pivot to Eurasia: Geopolitics and Foreign Policy in a Changing World Order' (London: Routledge, 2019).

⁵⁵ C. Hoffman, 'Neo-Ottomanism, Eurasianism or securing the region? A longer view on Turkey's interventionism,' *Conflict, Security and Development*, 19:3 (2019), pp 301-307.

⁵⁶ U. Cevikoz, 'Turkey in a Reconnecting Eurasia: Foreign Economic and Security Interests', *Centre for Strategic and International Studies*, (Lanham: Rowman and LittleField, 2016), p 24.

⁵⁷ P. Bilgin and A. Bilgic, 'Turkey's "New" Foreign Policy toward Eurasia', *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 52:2 (2013), p 186 fn 27.

idea of 'zero problems with neighbours'.⁵⁸ Some scholars highlight that the AKP governments under Erdoğan have continued Özal and his successors' Eurasian vision.⁵⁹ However, others argued that the AKP governments followed 'anti-Özal' policies.⁶⁰ This research shows that the AKP both continued and changed previous policies.

The crucial area of continuity was Ankara's increasing relations with Moscow. During the pre-AKP period, Turkey's relations with Russia significantly diverged from the traditional Cold War politics. An Ankara-Moscow rapprochement had already been enhanced in the areas of economic relations, technical cooperation and the exchange of scientific and military know-how despite the tensions related to the Chechen and Armenian-Azerbaijani conflicts in the Caucasus.

In particular, four pre-2001 agreements indicate how the AKP governments have continued to implement the policies of previous governments:

- Firstly, the EU-sponsored Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) program was established in 1993 at the Brussels Conference with the participation of the EU Commission and the governments of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The TRACECA forum is one of the infrastructure projects along the East-West corridor that connects Europe to Central Asia, the Caspian basin and the Black Sea ending at the borders of China and Afghanistan. Turkey has been one of the most active members of TRACECA since 2000.⁶¹
- Secondly, the Ankara and Moscow governments signed a bilateral agreement in 1997 to supply Russian natural gas to Turkey via Blue Stream (*Mavi Akım*) for twenty-five years.⁶²
- Thirdly, Turkey's deliberate balancing act with regard to energy networks extended to other security issues when a Joint Turkish-Russian Declaration on the Fight against Terrorism was signed in 1999.⁶³
- Fourthly, in 2001, 'the Joint Action Plan for Cooperation in Eurasia' signed between Ankara and Moscow was 'the most significant document to enhance bilateral coordination and cooperation in the region'.⁶⁴

Therefore, an alternative vision of Turkish foreign policy in Eurasia was already shaped before the AKP came to power in 2002.

A 'new' vision of Turkish foreign policy and the AKP

The first AKP government was formed by Abdullah Gül, who was briefly Prime Minister (2002-03) then Foreign Minister (2003-07), and who expressed a commitment to pursuing a delicate balance in 'good-neighbourly practices with the Russian Federation' and cultural affinity with the Turkic republics in Central Asia and the

⁵⁸ I. Cem, (2004) *Türkiye, Avrupa ve Avrasya*. Vol. 1: Strateji. Yunanistan. Kıbrıs (Turkey, Europe and Eurasia. Vol.1: Strategy, of Greece, Cyprus), (Istanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi) 2004, pp 33 & 59.

⁵⁹ M. B. Altunışık, 'Worldview and Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East', *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 40 (2009), pp. 169-172; Z. Öniş, 'Multiple faces of the "new" Turkish foreign policy: Underlying dynamics and a critique', *Insight Turkey*, 13:1 (2011), pp 47-65; Bilgin and Bilgic, Turkey's "New" Foreign, p 192 fn 36.

⁶⁰ Cevikoz, *Turkey in a Reconnecting Eurasia...*, p. 20.

⁶¹ See Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkey, www.mfa.gov.tr/traceca.en.mfa. Ukraine and Moldova joined in 1996, then Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey in 2000, followed by Iran in 2009.

⁶² See: www.gazprom.com

⁶³ Şener Aktürk, 'Turkish-Russian relations after the Cold War (1992–2002)', *Turkish Studies*, 7:3 (2006), pp 337–64.

⁶⁴ Cevikoz, *Turkey in a Reconnecting Eurasia...*, p 20.

Caucasus.⁶⁵

During the AKP's first term in power (2002-07), Ankara continued implementing 'good neighbourly' relations with Russia and promoting the sustainability of energy networks. In particular, Turkey and Russia signed relevant security agreements with Azerbaijan and Georgia in January 2002, while the construction of the Blue Stream gas pipeline was completed five months later, and natural gas supplies started the following year. The 2004-2005 Consultations Program set out Turkish-Russian cooperation in the areas of counter-terrorism, security, economy, and consular work. When President Vladimir Putin (1999-2008) visited Turkey 'the Joint Declaration on the Intensification of Friendship and Multidimensional Partnership' was signed in 2004. Four years later, Ankara and Moscow agreed to simplify customs procedures.

Hence, the AKP government seized the opportunity to improve relations with Russia when Washington, post-9/11, tacitly agreed to allow the Eurasian landscape to be redesigned by Moscow. Meanwhile, the Middle East gained priority in line with increasing international concerns about the Muslim world. When the AKP leaders consolidated their power in internal affairs they revisited Özal's ambitions in creating a 'Turkic age'. They also revived the idea of 'neo-Ottomanism' and this was interpreted by some as indications of a reviving pan-Islamism.⁶⁶

Ahmet Davutoğlu, who was a professor of International Relations and an advisor to Prime Minister Erdoğan, advanced Cem's idea of 'zero problems' with neighbours and developed a theory of 'strategic depth'.⁶⁷ Davutoğlu's ambitious vision focused on creating a new sphere of influence in Turkey's natural hinterland in the Middle East, the Balkans, the Caucasus and Africa, thereby creating a new sphere of Afro-Eurasia. Cem's notion of 'zero problems' was revisited, but Davutoğlu's ideas, developed in the 1990s, could not be implemented at the time because governments in Ankara were not ready to play for regional leadership.⁶⁸ Ankara's unresolved 'Armenian question' in particular has prevented Turkey from fulfilling its role of an honest broker in the South Caucasus. In Central Asia, the US-Russian competition over oil and gas sources lost its intensity, but the control of energy transportation has remained on the agenda. However, the changing regional and international conjuncture created new opportunities for revitalising Çiller's vision of making Turkey an East-West energy hub.

Gül's successor, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Prime Minister between 2003 and 2014, and since 2014 the 12th President of Turkey), had both a desire and a distinct vision. He sought to revive previous policies to transform Turkey into an energy hub. The crucial change from previous policies was based on the disappointments of Özal's vision in the 1990s.⁶⁹ the Caspian Region and energy networks were to be prioritized over cultural ties with Central Asia.

⁶⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAF 2020a) 'Türkiye-Rusya Federasyonu Siyasi İlişkileri (Turkey's Political Relations with the Russian Federation)', 2020 [Available at <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-rusya-siyasi-iliskileri.tr.mfa>]; Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAF 2020b) 'Turkey's Relations with Central Asian Republics', 2020 [Available at http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-relations-with-central-asian-republics.en.mfa]

⁶⁶ Hoffman, 'Neo-Ottomanism, Eurasianism'.

⁶⁷ A. Davutoğlu *Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu* (Strategic Depth: Turkey's International Position). (İstanbul, Küre Yayınları, 2001).

⁶⁸ A. Davutoğlu *Civilizational Transformation and the Muslim world* (İstanbul, BSV Yayınları, 1994); A. Davutoğlu, 'The clash of interests: An explanation of the world (dis)order', *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs*, 2:4 (1997).

⁶⁹ Bilgin and Bilgic, 'Turkey's "New" Foreign', p187.

Thereafter, the AKP government intensified bilateral relations with Azerbaijan and Georgia with the Blue Stream gas pipeline project in 2005, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline in 2006 and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) natural gas pipeline in 2007. As of 2021, the TRACECA corridor connects Asia reaching Bulgaria and Romania in Europe via Turkey and the South Caucasus transport routes of the Baku-Tbilisi-Batumi and Baku-Tbilisi-Poti railroads. The pipeline routes and the transit infrastructure of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) Railroad Project, which became operational in 2017 resulted in Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan being closely tied through energy, communications and transport links in the South Caucasus.

During the second (2007-11) and third (2011-15) terms of AKP governments, President Gül (2007-14) turned towards a more traditional foreign policy while balancing Ankara's pro-Western direction with new orientations. While the AKP leadership fully participated in the liberal international order, Turkey's geostrategic role between (Western) Europe and (Central) Asia was seen as a competitive advantage in making the 'new Turkey' the energy hub of the 21st century.

Ankara established bilateral relations with hydrocarbon-rich Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan in Central Asia, and this became the core pattern of broader regional integration schemes among Turkic-speaking countries.⁷⁰ Turkey's new initiative led to the establishment of a 'Commonwealth of Turkic-speaking Countries' with Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. When Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan dropped out, partly due to their mistrust of Ankara's expansionist policies and concerns for their sovereignty, Turkey changed its strategy once again. The Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States was signed between Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, and the Council was formally established in 2009.

Under Davutoğlu's leadership as Foreign Minister (2009–2014) and Prime Minister (2014–2016), the AKP governments put his theory of 'strategic depth' and 'multi-dimensional foreign policy' into practice.⁷¹ One of Ankara's most radical signs of strategic multi-dimensional policy was to continue prioritizing cooperation with Moscow despite Turkey's commitments as a NATO member.

Turkish-Russian geostrategic partnership

Turkish-Russian relations continued to improve under the AKP. Ankara proposed the so-called Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform (CSCP), which aimed at multilateral cooperation in the South Caucasus after the Georgian-Russian war in 2008. The CSCP brought the leaders of Turkey, Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia together in three successive meetings, though it failed to establish a successful forum for enhancing understanding and confidence in the region.⁷² Nevertheless, it created a momentum of diplomatic meetings among the heads of states.

The Ankara and Moscow governments agreed in principle to develop the South Stream Gas Pipeline, to be constructed under the Black Sea in 2009. Despite the EU's opposition, Turkey initially permitted launching a feasibility study of the South Stream in 2011 but then suspended it four years later. The High-Level Cooperation Council

⁷⁰ There are six Turkic speaking countries: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan.

⁷¹ A. Davutoğlu, 'Turkey's foreign policy vision: an assessment of 2007', *Insight Turkey*, 10:1(2008), pp 77–96.

⁷² Cevikoz, *Turkey in a Reconnecting Eurasia...*, p 20

between the Russian Federation and Turkey was established during Russian President Dmitriy Medvedev's (2008-12) visit to Turkey in 2010. Ankara and Moscow agreed to two deals which accepted reciprocal visa-free travel, and Russia supported the construction of Turkey's first nuclear power station in Akkuyu, near Mersin.⁷³ Meanwhile, Russian-Turkish cooperation advanced in the field of trade and energy so that 'around 65 per cent of Turkey's energy imports [we]re comprised of Russian oil and gas'.⁷⁴

During the third (2011-15) and fourth (2015-18) terms of AKP government, Turkey's engagement in Eurasia gained a new momentum at a time when Moscow promoted a Russian-led 'Greater Eurasia'. After Putin first publicly spoke of a 'Greater Eurasia' in 2013, his vision became strategically linked to China's Belt and Road Initiative. This has put Eurasia, where Turkey has a natural place, at the centre of shaping a new regional order. Putin has expressed his desire to see Ankara develop its relations with the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). Turkey responded cautiously given its alliances and commitments to the West. Furthermore, Russian-Turkish economic and energy relations were damaged by political conflicts and disagreements over Ukraine and Syria in the Middle East. In the Syrian war, Ankara claimed that Russian military aircraft violated Turkish airspace and this resulted in the downing of a Russian SU-24 by the Turkish Air Force on 24 November 2015.⁷⁵ Turkish-Russian 'good-neighbourly' relations were derailed but the geostrategic partnership was rescued by two energy projects: TANAP and TurkStream.

On the one hand, the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP) was designed as the backbone of the EU's Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) to reduce European dependence on Russian gas.⁷⁶ TANAP ensures the transfer of gas from the Caspian region directly via Turkey to Europe and is dubbed the 'Silk Road of energy'. Despite many hurdles, the successful completion of the TANAP project in 2018 and the transportation of Azeri natural gas through the pipeline in 2020 contributed towards Ankara's goal of becoming Europe's energy security supplier. As part of Turkey's increasing role in Eurasia, Ankara is also seeking to feed Turkmen gas into TANAP. Many analysts argue this cannot be achieved, but should Ankara succeed in this endeavour Turkey would become closer to realizing its ambition of becoming a key East-West 'energy hub'.⁷⁷



On the other hand, the most ambitious project of the Ankara-Moscow strategic partnership is TurkStream (TurkAkım), to link Russia with Turkey with a gas pipeline under the Black Sea. This was initially considered as an alternative to the South Stream gas project after the EU blocked the development of that project. At the time,

⁷³ MAF 2020a; Cevikoz, *Turkey in a Reconnecting*, p 20.

⁷⁴ Cevikoz, *Turkey in a Reconnecting Eurasia...*, p 20.

⁷⁵ Cevikoz, *Turkey in a Reconnecting*, p 21.

⁷⁶ The international agreement of the TANAP project was signed between the governments of Azerbaijan and Turkey in 2012 and began operating in 2020. See <https://www.tanap.com/media/news/tanap-set-for-completion-ahead-of-schedule-albayrak/> (Accessed on 26 July 2021).

⁷⁷ Cevikoz, *Turkey in a Reconnecting Eurasia...*, pp., 27-29; E. Ersen and M. Celikpala 'Turkey and the changing energy geopolitics of Eurasia,' *Energy Policy*, 128 (2019), p 588.

the Turkish government displayed a diplomatic mastery to negotiate an understanding with Russia, persuading Moscow to abandon the South Stream while gaining credits from the EU. President Putin acknowledged the cancellation of South Stream during his official visit to Ankara in December 2014.⁷⁸ When the Turkish Air Force shot down a Russian bomber in late 2015, the souring of Ankara-Moscow political affairs briefly put the TurkStream project on the shelf.

Despite disagreements in the Middle East, the Russian-Turkish strategic partnership further developed. After the failed coup attempt of July 2016 in Turkey, Putin expressed his strong support for Erdoğan. In a significant U-turn, Ankara abandoned its anti-Assad position and became part of the Russian-led Astana peace process in Syria. In energy cooperation, Erdoğan and Putin signed a deal on 10 October 2016 to realise the TurkStream project despite the increasing political, technical and financial challenges involved in the project. The EU competition rules that ended South Stream are still valid and pose a continuing challenge to TurkStream. In 2019, Turkey received the S-400 anti-aircraft missile system from Russia. This led to a diplomatic crisis with Washington given that Turkey is a member of NATO. When international politics was put on hold during the Covid-19 pandemic, Ankara and Moscow found themselves at the centre of a local conflict in 2020. The Nagorno-Karabagh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia tested the Russian-Turkish strategic partnership.

Concluding Remarks

Turkey's Eurasian vision was not a grand strategy designed by the AKP leaders but was rather a continuity of the post-Cold War search for alternative policies. Turkey's geostrategic constraints and its partnership with Russia continued to shape its foreign policy. Ankara has continued to recognize Russia as the leading security provider in Eurasia. Turkish foreign policy evolved around collaborative and competitive approaches towards Moscow in an attempt to re-shape the Eurasian political landscape. Following tensions over Syria and the SU-24 crisis, the recent Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan proved to be the acid test of Russian-Turkish strategic relations. With the signature of the Russian brokered peace agreement between Baku and Yerevan, it became clear that Russia and Turkey are in a low-impact competition for power, prestige and influence in the South Caucasus.⁷⁹ Although Turkey was not directly included in peace arrangements, Ankara's participation on the ground was recognised. The Azerbaijani President referred to the role of neighbouring countries in the establishment of transportation connections. As William Hale argued in the previous *TAS Review* (No 37), 'in broad strategic terms, Putin saw a rapprochement with Turkey and Azerbaijan as being more beneficial for Russia than an exclusive alliance with Armenia'.⁸⁰ In short, as defined by their geostrategic partnership in Eurasia, neither Ankara nor Moscow is willing to be drawn into another conflict in the broader regional context. Such geostrategic vision continues to constrain Turkish foreign policy at present, but what will be the impact of future post-pandemic challenges remains to be seen.



⁷⁸ Ersen & Celikpala, 'Turkey and the changing energy', p 585

⁷⁹ Ayla Göl, 'The Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh and the Impact of COVID-19 on International Diplomacy', *LSE Blog*, November 2020, see <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lseih/2020/11/11/the-conflict-in-nagorno-karabakh-and-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-international-diplomacy/>

⁸⁰ William Hale, 'Turkey, Russia and the Nagorno-Karabakh War: Events, Consequences and Prospects', *TAS Review*, Spring 2021, p 15.

FROM THE 2021 BATAS SYMPOSIUM
held by Zoom on
Saturday, 22 May at 5.00 pm UK time

Western European Views of
the Ottoman Empire,
from the
Renaissance to the Enlightenment

Sir Noel Malcolm

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The talk which I gave to the BATAS symposium was based on my recent book *Useful Enemies: Islam and the Ottoman Empire in Western Political Thought, 1450-1750* (Oxford, 2019). As its title indicates, this book does not attempt to cover the entire range of Western thinking about and responses to the Ottoman world, confining itself to the (broadly conceived) category of 'political thought'. In a Zoom lecture, I could not summarise more than a fraction of the argument of the book; I omitted, for example, the whole issue of Western political thinking about Islam. Here, in a brief summary of that talk, I have to be even more selective, so I shall concentrate on one topic: Ottoman so-called despotism.

I do this both because it was central to the talk I gave, and because it illustrates the most important, and most general, point I was trying to make: Western writers engaged actively with the information they received about the Ottoman Empire, and put it to work in a variety of ways that interacted with their own intra-Western political arguments. (Hence the title of my book: thinking about the Ottomans served all sorts of critical and polemical 'uses' within these intra-Western debates.) Too much writing about these matters in recent decades has displayed a rather blind subservience to Edward Said's theory of Orientalism, according to which Western accounts of the Ottoman Empire existed merely to project a sense of superiority over the Eastern 'other'. The real story of Western thinking about the Ottomans, I argue, was much more various and much, much more interesting than that.

There were of course strong traditions of negative stereotyping, dating back almost to the earliest Ottoman advances in the Balkans, and greatly invigorated by the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. Rhetorical arguments, designed to stimulate Western rulers and their subjects to prepare for defensive or offensive warfare against 'the Turk', established what became the standard view for the first few generations after that conquest, and continued to resonate long thereafter: the Ottomans were cruel, lustful, morally and culturally barbaric, and bent on a kind of dominion that involved reducing all those they conquered to the status of abject slaves. In the 1520s and 1530s Habsburg publicists, intensifying this rhetoric to drum up support for campaigns on the Habsburg-Ottoman frontier, portrayed the conflict as a defence of 'Europe' and warned of the dangers of total enslavement and the destruction of all human society. (That last point was emphasised all the more strongly because reports were reaching ordinary people in the Habsburg territories which said – accurately – that the conditions of life

under Ottoman rule were more favourable, and the obligations on peasants less onerous, than those in Western feudal societies.)

In the middle decades of the sixteenth century, however, a very different picture of Ottoman life began to emerge. Widely-studied works by French diplomats, travellers and scholars, such as Nicolas de Nicolay, Pierre Belon and Guillaume Postel, when read in conjunction with detailed accounts of life in the Ottoman lands by Westerners who had lived there as captives for many years (such as George of Hungary, Bartolomej Djurdjević and Antonio Menavino), supplied a coherent picture of a surprisingly well-functioning system of government and society – a system which compared favourably with Western practices on one point after another. Writers admired not only the impressive military discipline in the Ottoman army, which had been a focus of Western comment for some time already, but also the high level of public order and safety in the towns; the speed and efficiency of the justice system, which seemed so much better than the long-drawn-out processes of Western court cases and appeals; the extraordinary range of public goods provided by charitable foundations (*vakıfs*), such as the *hans* that gave free lodging to travellers and the *imarets* that fed the poor; the principle of meritocracy, which, in the absence of any formal system of hereditary nobility, enabled the sons of peasants to rise (via the *devşirme* recruitment process) to the highest ranks of government and society; and the relative toleration of Christians and Jews, which gave them a degree of protection, and of non-interference with their religious life, that was quite obviously better than the treatment in Christian societies of non-Christians (or – especially – of Christians of the ‘wrong’ variety).

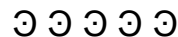
Some of these observations had been made, fragmentarily, by previous writers. But the point I want to emphasise is that they came together, in the mid-sixteenth century, as the components of what seemed to be a whole *system* of government and society – something I have described as ‘the new paradigm’. Some people felt that this system was the underlying reason for Ottoman military success and territorial expansion; so analysing it was a task of great importance. Some concluded that if the Christian powers were to oppose the Ottomans successfully, they would need to adopt some of these methods themselves. And many found that these positive Ottoman principles were very useful sticks with which to beat their own societies, arguing that Christians should feel ashamed to see mere infidels organising human life in more rational and more morally praiseworthy ways. (This whole strategy of argument, which I have called ‘shame-praising’, recurred again and again in Western writings for much of the early modern period.)

For many publicists and polemicists, however, convincing readers of the need to supply money and men for the anti-Ottoman fight remained the overriding concern. Seeing the Ottoman system as in any way preferable was not, for them, an acceptable viewpoint. And after the Council of Trent, Catholic Counter-Reformation writers were even more keen to denigrate any kind of regime that was not based on, and animated by, correct Catholic doctrine. The thoroughly negative concept of Ottoman (and, more generally, oriental) ‘despotism’ was developed by two Catholic writers of the late sixteenth century, René de Lucinge and Giovanni Botero; and the conceptual trick they performed was a clever one. They could not dismiss the factual evidence, so widely available in the writings of people with first-hand experience of the Ottoman Empire; nor did they deny the premise that there was a distinctive *system* of government at work there; but they switched the whole interpretation from positive to negative, re-

valorising the new paradigm at every point. The level of public order was merely a sign that everyone was cowering in fear of draconian punishments. The administration of justice was so speedy because it involved nothing more than arbitrary judgments, both minatory and capricious. The apparent meritocracy was simply a consequence of the brutal elimination of all natural social order, leaving people to rise to prominence only, once again, because of the whim of the Sultan. And underlying all this, they argued, was the reduction in status of the entire population to something equivalent to, or even identical with, slavery.

Once established, at the end of the sixteenth century, this concept of Ottoman despotism became strongly entrenched in Western thinking. In the following century it was adapted easily enough to the more negative accounts that were now coming in of the actual conditions in the Ottoman Empire: corruption, janissary revolts, even the murder of the Sultan, Osman II, in 1622. Yet increasingly, polemical discussions in Western Europe that invoked this idea were shadow-debates, in which writers whose real aim was to criticise their own monarchs (and/or the policies of their advisers) did so by means of allusions to the Ottoman case. Even then, there were some free-thinkers – Samuel Sorbière in the mid-seventeenth century, and Simon-Nicolas-Henri Linguet in the late eighteenth – who portrayed the Ottoman model of rule as genuinely superior to the standard West European one, as it eliminated the hereditary aristocracy and its constitutional powers, from which, in their opinion, all sorts of evils flowed, from oppression of the common people to factionalism and civil war.

Positive views of the Ottomans were mostly minority views. But they did exist – for a variety of reasons, often intra-Western ones – and they did play a significant part in the development of Western thinking about such political issues more generally. We do no justice to this rich history if we try to squeeze it into the simplistic Saidian template of non-stop demonisation of the ‘other’.



Turkish Perceptions of the West and the UK: Between Admiration and Animosity

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The question of Turkey’s Western orientation has been a prominent issue among political and academic circles since the end of the Second World War. Although Turkey was seen as a ‘pillar of Western security policy’⁸¹ during the Cold War years, there

⁸¹ David Barchard, “Whose Side is Turkey on?”, *Prospect Magazine*, 13 November 2014, Available online <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/whose-side-is-turkey-on>, last accessed: 12 July 2021.

were still questions about its place in the West due to its shortcomings in democracy and human rights. With the end of the Cold War, scepticism regarding Turkey's place in the West continued, but predictions about the future were also positive. Writing shortly before the defeat of the USSR, David Barchard, for instance, discussed future models for Turkey and the West, which included peripheral EU membership similar to Spain and Greece, and therefore strongly anchored in the West.⁸² These types of projections perhaps reached their peak in the early 2000s, when Turkey's accession talks with the EU started. However, only a decade later, pessimism followed, questioning even Turkey's broader alliance with the West.

Reasons for Turkey's ups-and-downs with the West have been widely covered in the academic literature. Those who work more in the liberal international relations tradition explain Turkey's changing relations with the West by looking at the ideological stances of various governments and leaders.⁸³ Conversely, those who adhere more to the realist perspective attach changes in attitudes to transformations in the international and regional context.⁸⁴

In recent years, shifts in domestic politics, such as the ideological position of Erdoğan's AKP, were used to explain the downturn in Turkey's relations with the West. Regional conflict, such as the civil war in Syria and tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean, also put Turkish interests at odds with Western policies. Finally, the international context, such as the end of the bipolar world, the rise of China and other Asian powers and the global economic crunch, provide the general context to understand the positions of the West and Turkey in relation to one another.⁸⁵

Despite the rich analysis provided by these recent and past explanations, they have two main shortcomings. First, Turkey's changing relations with the West are usually described based on varying dynamics or contingent factors, rather than constant and deep-running aspects that influence relations. Second, in most accounts of this literature, the West is seen as the USA and Europe, including NATO and the EU, with seldom any unpacking of different countries belonging to the category of 'the West'. However, an in-depth analysis of general public and elite perceptions toward different Western countries can show the underlying causes of various changes in foreign policy and contribute to our broader understanding of Turkey's relations with the West.

There is, indeed, an extensive body of work that has successfully shown how Turkish collective identity was shaped throughout centuries because of its relations with the

⁸² David Barchard, *Turkey and the West*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul for Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1985.

⁸³ For an example of this type of argument, see Behlül Özkan, "Turkey, Davutoglu and the Idea of Pan-Islamism", *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 56, 2014, pp. 119-140.

⁸⁴ For an example of this approach applied to Turkish foreign policy, see Emre İşeri and Oğuz Dilek, "The Limitations of Turkey's New Foreign Policy Activism in the Caucasian Regional Security Complexity", *Turkish Studies*, 12, 2011, 41-54. For an overview of the liberal and realist literature on Turkish foreign policy, see Faruk Yalvaç, "Approaches to Turkish Foreign Policy: A Critical Realist Analysis", *Turkish Studies*, 15, 2014, pp. 117-138, especially pp. 118-122.

⁸⁵ For an overview of these factors, see Yaprak Gürsoy and Ilke Toygür, "Turkey in and out of NATO? An Instance of a Turbulent Alliance with Western Institutions," *Analyses of the Elcano Royal Institute (ARI)*, 11 June 2018, Available online: http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/ri/elcano_en/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_in/zonas_in/ARI73-2018-Gursoy-Toygur-Turkey-in-out-NATO-turbulent-alliance-Western-institutions last accessed 12 July 2021. For a recent analysis on changes in Turkish foreign policy, see Mustafa Kutlay and Ziya Öniş, "Turkish Foreign Policy in a Post-Western Order: Strategic Autonomy or New Forms of Dependence?," *International Affairs*, 97 (4), 2021, pp. 1085-1104.

West. This collective identity goes back to the Ottoman Empire's stigmatization by European powers as the backward and barbaric savage, a derogation that is still ongoing and pits Turkey as Europe's 'other'.⁸⁶ To a certain extent, this stigmatization was also internalised in Turkish collective consciousness due to loss of international status, along with loss of territory and near colonisation, at the turn of the 20th century. The experience of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire led to what is known as the 'Sèvres Syndrome'⁸⁷ or feelings of inferiority, along with desires to re-establish international status and superiority.⁸⁸

Seen from this perspective, Turkey's changing relations with the West are not only due to contingent factors, such as shifting domestic, regional or international circumstances, but are also because of deep-running resentments. However, these resentments do not only translate into negative or suspicious perceptions. They also contain in them favourable opinions of the West, especially in terms of its more developed political and economic system or its 'superiority'. Thus, Turkish perceptions of the West cover seemingly contradictory attitudes of hostility and awe, which manifest themselves in Turkey almost periodically, leading to positive or negative relations in different periods.

My recent research on Turkish elite perceptions of the UK reveals these types of contradictory perceptions.⁸⁹ In the parliamentary speeches of Turkish MPs between 2011 and 2018, the UK was referred to as a positive model to emulate with its political and economic system. This type of admiration was evidenced in around 39% of the segments which contained a reference to the UK in parliamentary speeches. Yet, there were also feelings of hostility in speeches, with nearly 25% of the segments indicating the existence of an enemy perception. The UK was seen as acting against Turkish interests mostly due to historical animosities, including the First World War. Like these negative perceptions as a result of past conflict, the UK was also mentioned as an aggressive global actor in Turkey's neighbourhood in around 6% of the speeches.

In this research on parliamentary speeches, I also kept track of other countries with which the UK was referenced. Preliminary findings from this data suggest that other Western countries are also likely to be viewed both as a positive model to imitate or as a benchmark to compare Turkey with. However, at the same time, European powers and the USA are also seen as potential enemies.

These results on the perceptions of Turkish MPs are in line with previous research conducted by McLaren and Müftüleri-Baç, which showed that while the Turkish elite looked positively upon the idea of being an EU member, they also thought that Turkey

⁸⁶ Bahar Rumelili, "Constructing Identity and Relating to Difference: Understanding the EU's Mode of Differentiation," *Review of International Studies*, 30, 2004, pp. 27-47; Senem Aydın-Düzgit, *Constructions of European Identity: Debates and Discourses on Turkey and the EU* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

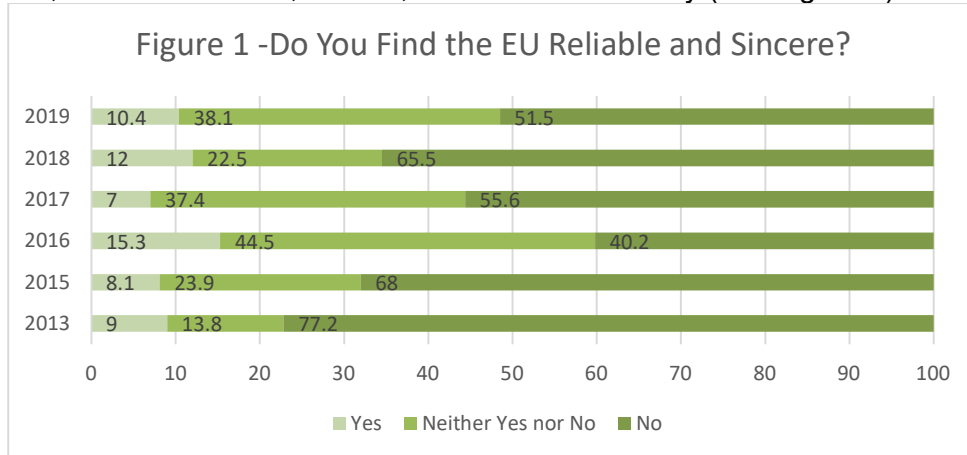
⁸⁷ For an account of the significance of the phenomenon, see Michelangelo Guida. "The Sèvres Syndrome and 'Komplo' Theories in the Islamist and Secular Press," *Turkish Studies*, 9 (1), 2008, 37-52.

⁸⁸ Pınar Bilgin, "Securing Turkey through Western-Oriented Foreign Policy," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 40, 2009, pp. 103-23; Lerna K. Yanık, "Constructing Turkish 'Exceptionalism': Discourses of Liminality and Hybridity in Post-Cold War Turkish Foreign Policy," *Political Geography*, 30(2), February 2011, pp. 80-9.

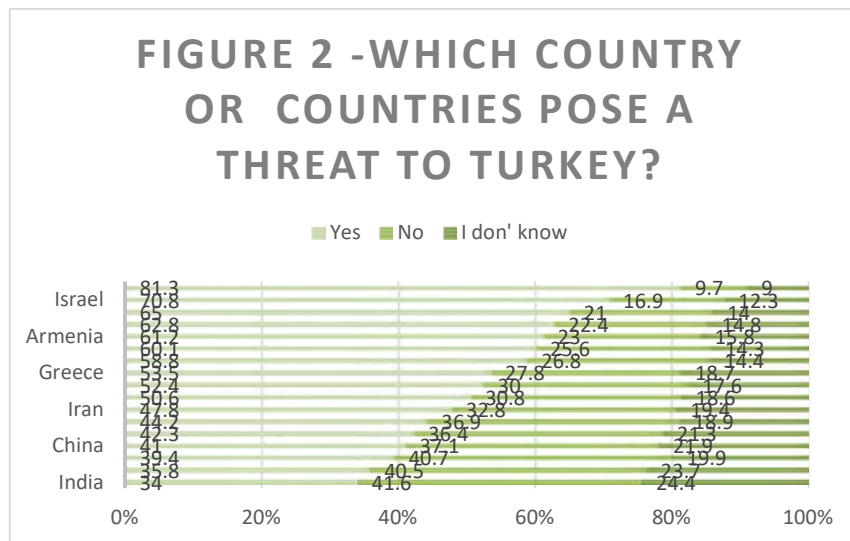
⁸⁹ Yaprak Gürsoy, "Reconsidering Britain's Soft Power: Lessons from the Perceptions of the Turkish Political Elite," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 2020, DOI: 10.1080/09557571.2020.1832959.

lagged behind Europe due to its political or economic problems.⁹⁰ Furthermore, MPs thought that one of the biggest obstacles of membership in the EU was Turkey’s Muslim identity. This type of acknowledgement by the MPs indicates the existence of an awareness of being Europe’s ‘other’ and potential resentments.

Public opinion surveys conducted by the Centre for Turkish Studies at Kadir Has University imply similar contradictory perceptions toward the West.⁹¹ For instance, when respondents were asked if they found the EU reliable and sincere, in most years, the majority answered with a “no” (see Figure 1). Similarly, when asked which countries were threats to Turkey, the majority of the respondents named Western countries, such as the USA, France, the UK and Germany (see Figure 2).



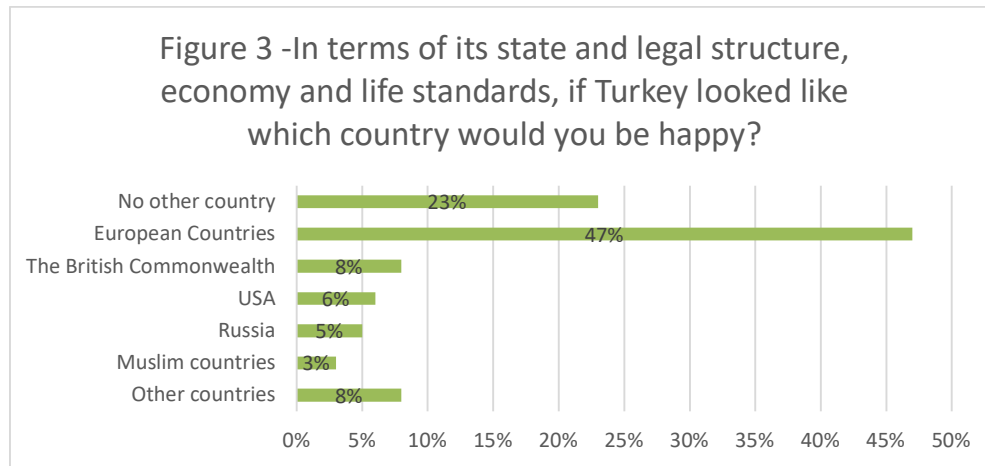
Source: Mustafa Aydın, Sinem Akgül Açıkmeşe, Mitat Çelikpala, Soli Özel, Cihan Dizdaroğlu and Mustafa Gokcan Kosen, *Research on Public Perceptions on Turkish Foreign Policy*, Center for Turkish Studies – Kadir Has University, 4 July 2019, Available online: https://www.khas.edu.tr/sites/khas.edu.tr/files/inline-files/TDP-2019_BASINENG_FINAL.PDF, last accessed 9 July 2021, page 48 (Figure 1) and page 26 (Figure 2)



⁹⁰ Lauren M. McLaren and Meltem Müftüler-Baç, “Turkish Parliamentarians’ Perspectives on Turkey’s Relations with the European Union,” *Turkish Studies*, 4(1), 2003, 195-218.

⁹¹ Mustafa Aydın, Sinem Akgül Açıkmeşe, Mitat Çelikpala, Soli Özel, Cihan Dizdaroğlu and Mustafa Gokcan Kosen, “Research on Public Perceptions on Turkish Foreign Policy”, Center for Turkish Studies – Kadir Has University, 4 July 2019, Available online: https://www.khas.edu.tr/sites/khas.edu.tr/files/inline-files/TDP-2019_BASINENG_FINAL.PDF, last accessed 9 July 2021.

These negative sentiments, however, contrast with more positive views. According to a public opinion survey conducted by KONDA in 2018,⁹² almost half of the respondents chose European countries to answer the question “In terms of its state and legal structure, economy and life standards, if Turkey looked like which country would you be happy?” (see Figure 3). If those who listed the USA and the Commonwealth are included in the answer as part of the West, it is a clear that the majority would favour similar life standards to Western nations. Those who would prefer Turkey not to look like any other country is only a minority of 23 %.



Source: KONDA Veri Ambari, September 2018, Available online: <https://interaktif.konda.com.tr/2018-matris#>, last accessed 9 July 2021.

In conclusion, results from these and other public opinion surveys, as well as studies on elite views, show that perceptions of animosity and distrust, on the one hand, and admiration and awe, on the other, are common in Turkish perceptions of the West. While these views are ingrained in Turkish collective identity as a result of historical experiences, they also hold the key to changes in foreign policy. Further research linking perceptions to foreign policy would help understand the ebbs and flows of Turkey’s relations with the West. Although domestic, regional and international factors are undoubtedly important, the underlying issues that give meaning to these contingent factors should also be taken into account in political analyses. Only when we understand dual perceptions of admiration and awe toward the West, can we also then propose sound and stable foreign policy recommendations, establishing Turkey’s relations with Europe and the US on a firm footing.



⁹² KONDA Veri Ambari, September 2018, Available online: <https://interaktif.konda.com.tr/2018-matris#>, last accessed 9 July 2021.



Turkey and the West: Mutually Suspicious Perceptions in Film

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Cinematic Image of Turk as the Other

There have been more than 150 popular Hollywood films that presented Turkey and the Turks in an Orientalist manner. That is, after more than sixty years of participating in Western democracy, having established a liberal market economy, and enjoying a functioning multi-party democratic political system, the image of Turkey in Hollywood is still emphatically that of the Eastern, lustful, and barbaric Turk. Against that background, the Turkish cinema's depiction of the Westerner has been one of a cowardly, clumsy enemy. This piece will look at the discourses of Orientalism and Occidentalism that Turkish and Hollywood cinemas feed upon and reflect on each other.

As Nevsal Tiryakioğlu states,

"Muslims and Arabs are stereotyped and demonised constantly in American cinema, and initially Turks were lumped into the same group. Turks in films have their own unique set of characteristics besides the common qualities of the Muslim stereotype. Even though Turks are treated as the Oriental 'Other' in cinema, there is a peculiarity with the Turkish stereotype that sets it apart from the Arab image. Also, there has been a uniformity and permanence in the Turkish cinematic image that neither Arabs nor other Muslims have embodied on the film screens. This approach creates a distinction between the image of Arabs and Turks in Western cinema"⁹³.

Tiryakioğlu and other scholars like Dilek Kaya-Mutlu⁹⁴ indicate that American cinema tended to shift attitudes towards Arab characters after a while but remained very negative and confrontational to Turkish characters. In a way that may be deemed very offensive. The image of the terrible and demon Turk did not improve, and Turks in American cinema continued to be represented as 'cruel', 'violent', 'murderous', 'treacherous', 'corrupt', 'sexually aggressive' and 'sexually perverted'.⁹⁵



Figure 1: Sexual assault on and barbaric treatment of the British hero in the hands of the Turks in *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) reinforces the demon Turk image in western media.⁹⁶

⁹³ Nevsal Tiryakioğlu, *The Western Image of Turks from the Middle Ages to the Twenty First Century: The Myth of the "Terrible Turk" and "Lustful Turk"*, Ph.D. thesis, Nottingham Trent University, 2015, p. 142.

⁹⁴ Dilek Kaya-Mutlu, *The Midnight Express Phenomenon* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010).

⁹⁵ Tiryakioğlu, p. 144.

⁹⁶ Laurence Raw, 'TE Lawrence, the Turks, and the Arab Revolt in the Cinema: Anglo-American and Turkish Representations', *Literature/Film Quarterly* 33.4 (2005): 252-261.



Figure 2: *Midnight Express* (1978) has been the penultimate film that represented Turks as an uncivilised barbarian race through the abuse and mistreatment endured by its American drug trafficker in prison hero.



Figures 3-4: Western films taking place in Istanbul represent Westerners as men of action and Turks as lustful and hedonistic as in *Skyfall* (2012) and *Taken 2* (2012).⁹⁷



The Turk as the Despot

Turkish despots have been of particular interest to Western cinema from early on. Films such as *Ravished Armenia* (1919) show the Turk as the oppressor and even as a mass murderer. In these films the image of the Turk is that of the amoral, lawless, brute. He is also presented as a womanizer, the ruler of a harem of exotic and beautiful women. At the same time, the sexual aggression of Turkish men manifests itself in a homophobic/rapist depiction of homosexuality in films such as *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) and *Midnight Express* (1978). Added to this representation are films that use Turkey and mostly Istanbul as the hedonist location of lazy ease, bazaars and lust in *From Russia with Love* (1963), *Topkapi* (1964), *Murder on the Orient Express* (1974), *The Favourite* (1989), *Hamam Turkish Bath* (1997) and *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (2011)

Images of the West – Occidentalism?

Turkish films also frame the West in a negative way. Early examples rode on a nationalist historical wave as in the case of War of Independence films of the classic Yeşilçam cinema 1950s-1960-1970s. Films like *İngiliz Kemal* present the Western invasion forces as inhuman and disrespectful to cultural values. The character of Kemal is based on Ahmet Esat Tomruk, a real-life Turkish spy (1893-1967) who was educated in the UK and later worked for the Turkish army as a spy.



Figures 5-6 Ahmet Esat Tomruk (Kemal the English) was a real-life Turkish spy whose life was later fictionalised in Turkish films.



⁹⁷ Murat Akser, 'From Istanbul with love: The new orientalism of Hollywood', in Koçak, Dilek Özhan, and Orhan Kemal Koçak, eds. *Whose City Is That? Culture, Design, Spectacle and Capital in Istanbul*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014. 35-46.

In 1952 Lütfi Akad directed *İngiliz Kemal* (Kemal the English) based on Tomruk's character starring Ayhan Işık and Muzaffer Tema. In this film, the British and other invading forces are presented as uncivilized and dishonest. They are portrayed as corrupting young Turkish women. Seductive Western women in the film bring about destruction through betrayal – a trend seen in most Turkish films involving women of foreign origin ever since. Turks, as the just heroes, show their physical strength as part of their moral strength. Kemal beats the British in a boxing match as he derives his physical prowess from his just cause of liberating the Turkish land from foreign invaders. Years later these themes are echoed in films like *Son Osmanlı: Yandım Ali – The Last Ottoman: Knockout*.



Figure 7: Kemal the English among the seductive Western femmes fatales.



Figures 8-9: Stills from *Kemal the English* about the boxing match (left) and call for his capture (right) *Yandım Ali*, (*Knockout Ali*) is a fictional resistance fighter from a graphic novel originally written by Suat Yalaz, a hoodlum who worked for the underground resistance in occupied Istanbul in 1920. Ali, played by a former male model, Kenan İmirzalıoğlu, who himself is portrayed in the films as the epitome of sexual prowess, cunning, and physical superiority, is the handsome/charming Turkish hero. The virtuous Turkish woman (Cansu Dere) helps the Turkish hero defeat the Western enemy. As the formula of this film genre goes there are also Western femmes fatales, betrayals, and corrupting Western influences against the Turkish hero. Similar trends are still prevalent in Turkish film and TV through series such as *Ya İstiklal Ya Olum* (Either Independence or Death). For example, *Kurtlar Vadisi* (Valley of the Wolves) is a landmark film series based on populist misconceptions about the West and on conspiracy theories that represents the West as a corrupting and destabilizing force.

A Barrage of Dardanelles Films

2015 was the centenary year of the 1915 Gallipoli Campaign which saw the creation of a flood of war films in Turkey dealing with the similar themes of the evil and corrupt Western forces. In these films, Turkish bravery confronted Western cowardice. Human emotions were attributed to Turks who faced cold Western rationality. It was a war of low-tech vs high tech. There is almost always a love affair between Turks and their enemies, between a Turkish male and a Western woman (or a Western-educated woman)



Figures 10-11: 2015 Gallipoli campaign-themed film posters

Deep History- Byzantium

There is a special historical action genre in Turkish cinema that represents Westerners as pure evil. The historical adventure film's ideological function is to justify/explain how a small tribe from the Central Asian Turkic heartland is able to become an empire that rules on three continents for centuries. The typical historical adventure film series in the 1960s-70s in Turkish cinema worked discursively to resolve this problem through the superior physical and moral strength of its Turkish heroes as well as their corrupt and evil nemesis in the form of the Byzantium/East Roman peoples. This film genre is focused rather on the nation-state aspect of modernity. The ethnic-nationalist discourse in these historical adventure films is quite a-historical, as the characters identify themselves as Turkish peoples. These film series involved some of the lead actors of the day such as Kartal Tibet (Karaođlan, Tarkan) and Cüneyt Arkin (Kara Murat, Battal Gazi). In this ethnic-nationalist discourse, Turks are represented as agile, morally superior, and protective of women. The characters are handsome, athletic, virtuous and modest, and their costumes are humble as opposed to the conspicuous Romans. The films included iconography such as the Turkish/Muslim flag vs Christian cross. The stylistic elements of these films included fast-paced editing of the fight sequences and exaggerated sound effects. These films' plots involved love affairs, betrayals and revenge. Such qualities of a Turkish historical adventure film make the viewer glorify the Turk and be critical of the West.⁹⁸



Figures 12-13: The original 70s historical adventure film *Battal Gazi* (1973) and the Parody film *Kahpe Bizans* (1999)



The parodies of Turkish film genres tend to debunk the modernist discourses as in the case of *Kahpe Bizans* (Down with the Romans). In the early 2000s, with a three party coalition government in power in Turkey, and EU membership seemingly on the

⁹⁸ Murat Akser, *Green Pine Resurrected: Film Genre, Parody and Intertextuality in Turkish Cinema*. Lambert Academic Publishing, 2010.

horizon, the sense of attempting to understand others and accept diversity supported a film production regime that was inclusive and self-mocking. Parody films of this era allow for reversing ethno-centric discourse. For example, in *Kahpe Bizans* women are presented as powerful as men. Turks and Romans become friends in the end. The film even makes fun of the Turkish nationalist myths such as claiming that Turks originate from Australia. The film was extremely successful at the box office and spawned a film sequel years later. Action-adventure films still continue their hard-core nationalism as in the example of the recent *Fetih 1453* (2012) and *Kara Murat* (2015) films.

Comedy films like the *Avrupalı* (The European, 2007), *Yahşi Bati* (the Mild West, 2010) and *Osmanlı Cumhuriyeti* (The Ottoman Republic, 2008) have another take on the Occidentalism portrayal of the West from a Turkish perspective by poking fun and mocking the Westerner. These films portray the West as lacking compassion, love, and smart thinking.⁹⁹ In *Avrupalı* the Turkish character is trying to negotiate a fair deal in joining the EU but has to face the evil Europeans who are denying Turks equal treatment. In *Yahşi Bati* the Ottoman characters find themselves in the 19th century US Wild West while trying to deliver the Sultan's gift of a large diamond to the US president. The Ottomans bring fun and civilization and introduce novelties like Cola Turca to prove their wit, cunning, modesty, honesty and other morally superior values. In *Osmanlı Cumhuriyeti* we face a counter-factual, alternative historical narrative. Mustafa Kemal died before he could liberate Anatolia and establish the Turkish Republic. The Sèvres Treaty has become a reality, and the last Ottoman Sultan is a puppet figure. Through going back to his roots, denying Western ways and finding happiness in a younger Turkish woman (Vildan Atasever), the Sultan declares a war of independence on the evil Western invaders and wins.



Figures 14-15-16: The Turkish cowboys in *Yahşi Bati*, *Avrupalı* and the Ottoman Sultan who cannot get used to eating burgers in *Osmanlı Cumhuriyeti*.

Narrative Geopolitics of the Image: Valley of the Wolves

Finally the Westerner is shown as pure evil in conspiracy theory-based populist tv series like *The Valley of the Wolves* (Kurtlar Vadisi). This successful tv show used a mixture of real-life scandals, geopolitical discourse and spy thriller genre for its plotlines. The Turks stood alone against the rest of the world and were under constant pressure from evil Western countries like the US. The series came around the time of

⁹⁹ Elif Kahraman. 'Arm-wrestling a super power: American representations in Turkish comedies'. In Akser, Murat, and Deniz Bayraktar, eds. *New cinema, new media: Reinventing Turkish cinema*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014.

post-9/11 events from the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq to the Arab Spring. Its pilot episode had the main hero as a white, blond, (Western-secular) looking person who had to change his face and identity to become the criminal Polat Alemdar to infiltrate the mob.



Figures 17-18: The reborn character of Valley of the Wolves and the evil Americans torturing Middle Eastern peoples in *The Valley of the Wolves Palestine*.

A series of films from the series were made, most notably *Kurtlar Vadisi Iraq* (2006) and *Kurtlar Vadisi: Filistin* (2011).¹⁰⁰ The latter was based on the attack on the Mavi Marmara flotilla and included terrible depictions of the Americans. This stereotyping of 'black and white' is the portrayal of opposing forces in a very simplistic manner such as good versus evil. In these films Americans murder, torture and suffocate innocent civilians. Jewish-American characters are portrayed as especially inhuman. The 2011 film is deemed to be very anti-Semitic as its international release day coincided with International Holocaust Remembrance Day.¹⁰¹

As a conclusion

Orientalism driven literary tradition influenced Western cinematic depictions of the Turks initially. Later, the Cyprus issue and the US weapons embargo in the 1970s led to support for films like *Midnight Express*. The post- 9/11 backlash in representations of Muslims eased over time but not for Turkish characters. After the Syrian conflict and the events of the Arab Spring, Turkish characters appear as policy makers in series such as *24*. Western heroes are moral, energetic and high tech. Turkey is depicted as an exotic, womanizing, backward land in films like *Skyfall*, and the film *Taken 2* continues this narrative. The Turkish view of the West in cinema is first shaped by memories and films of the WWI, invasion and the War of Independence. Films like *İngiliz Kemal* established a genre of Turkish moral heroes defeating the corrupting Western enemy. This tradition continues with 1915 Dardanelles films. In the 1970s there was a historical representation of the West through adventure films where Byzantium is beaten by the morally superior Turks. The parodies of these films in the early 2000s set a different tone at a time when there was hope for EU membership. But, later in that decade, when the hopes of full EU membership dissipated, the themes of films centred on geopolitics and conspiracy-inspired thrillers like *Valley of the Wolves*. This reversed the roles and presented one-dimensional barbarian Western characters.

¹⁰⁰ Lerna Yanik. 'Valley of the Wolves—Iraq: Anti-Geopolitics Alla Turca'. *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 2.1 (2009): 153-170.

¹⁰¹ Berfin Emre Çetin. *The Paramilitary Hero on Turkish Television: A Case Study on Valley of the Wolves*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015.

Appointing a Rector (President): Kulturkampf meets Academe

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Introduction

In the early hours of 1 January 2021 Boğaziçi University (BU) faculty, staff and students woke up to the news that they had a new rector (president) appointed to preside over them. The Constitution stated that "...University presidents shall be elected and appointed by the President of the Republic, ..., in accordance with the procedures and provisions of the law" (article 130). There was no 'election' in any sense of the term though the President seems to have been presented with a list of names by the Higher Educational Council (YÖK) as stipulated by the law (Act 2547). It looks as if the procedure was followed to a certain extent but without heeding the stipulation of the Constitution that universities were to have "... scientific autonomy and public legal personality..." (art. 130). In fact, such a practice of appointing rectors of universities with total disregard for their institutional autonomy had originally been used by the military junta and the governments which followed it from 1982 until 1992 at every Turkish university. This act of the President in 2021 seemed to have all the drama and characteristics of a similar decision-making process of executive tutelage over the public universities. The BU faculty and students contested the decision in question, which completely disregarded their sensitivities, thoughts, and even agency. They started daily peaceful protests on 4 January 2021, which were disrupted occasionally by police intervention and arrests of students on such charges as having contact with terror organizations, denigrating religious (Islamic) symbols, and resisting public officials.

In the aftermath of the botched coup attempt of 2016, President Erdoğan had appointed a rector of BU with a similar disregard for university autonomy or the faculty vote. Prof. Dr Gülay Barbarosoğlu had secured 86% of the vote. But *bona fide* academic Prof. Dr Mehmet Özkan at BU, who had previously been serving as a vice-rector, but had not even run as a candidate in the faculty elections in 2016 was hand-picked by Erdoğan. The students had also objected then, but the faculty seemed to have accepted the Presidential appointment of Prof. Özkan. The student protests eventually died down and the university continued to function on the basis of its own customs and norms, unperturbed by the appointment of the rector after 2016. However, in 2021 the governing Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) was taken by surprise at the widespread and persistent reactions and protests of the faculty as well as the students.



In 2021 Prof. Dr Melih Bulu was appointed rector. Prof. Bulu had been a graduate student, at BU earning his PhD in Business Administration at BU, but he had never been employed there as an academic. Indeed, he had previously served as a rector at newly established private foundation (*vakıf*) universities (established by private charitable endowments), but not at a public university. His predecessor, Prof. Özkan had a close relative among the AKP politicians, while Prof. Bulu had unsuccessfully run in elections for several political offices under the AKP ticket. This seemed to have reinforced the impression that Prof. Bulu was a partisan appointment by President Erdoğan in the eyes and minds of the faculty and the students. His appointment was considered unfair, since the changes in the procedure for the appointment of the rectors that were made in 2016 were so disparaging of and demeaning for the faculty and students¹⁰².

The question thus becomes, why were the faculty and students of Boğaziçi University treated in such a degrading and disdainful fashion by the YÖK and the President?

Boğaziçi University: An Idiosyncratic Higher Educational Institution

Among Turkish universities¹⁰³ Boğaziçi University is the only institution that traces its roots back to the first US college built out of the US territories in Istanbul as Robert College in 1863. Robert College was modelled after the US liberal arts colleges.¹⁰⁴ It survived as a small liberal arts college, with about 800 students. Its trustees discovered in the 1960s that the College could not sustain its operations with the level of tuition fees they were allowed to charge, and they could not expand their operations due to stipulations in the Treaty of Lausanne. They finally decided to turn the College

¹⁰² On 18 August 2016 the AKP parliamentary party group motioned an amendment to the Higher Education Act no. 2547 (art. 13.a) to enable the President to appoint rectors to universities, with or without the assistance of YÖK (Bilim Akademisi, "Bilim Akademisi Akademik Özgürlükler Raporu 2015 – 2016" (Science Academy Report on Academic Freedoms 2015 – 2016) (Istanbul): 7-8). The justification for this amendment was bizarre: "Rector's elections cause unfair practices, resentments and personal conflicts in universities and cause chaos in higher education institutions. For this reason, abandoning the election system in universities and introducing the appointment system is aimed at eliminating these problems" Bilim Akademisi (Academy of Science), *loc. cit.*: 8). The AKP, which has based its legitimate authority solely upon its election by the "national will" was arguing that elections were bad for the most educated community in the country, the academics, who apparently fail to respect the choice of their colleagues. Instead, the President, as the leader of a political party, with no academic credentials, was deemed to be better suited to appoint rectors. The amendment failed to pass. So, the Presidency promulgated a Presidential Decree (no. 3) for the appointment of high ranking public officials, including the rectors of universities (See Kemal Gözler (2019) "Cumhurbaşkanlığı Hükümet Sisteminin Uygulamadaki Değeri: Bir Buçuk Yıllık Bir Bilanço" (The Value of the Presidential Government System in Practice: An 18-Month Balance Sheet) (<https://www.anayasa.gen.tr/cbhs-bilanco.htm>)).

¹⁰³ There are currently 203 universities and four Higher Vocational Schools (Meslek Yüksek Okulu) in Turkey, according to YÖK; 70 of the 203 are established by charitable endowments and 133 are public (state owned) universities. Boğaziçi University was established in 1971.

¹⁰⁴ Robert College had been established by American Protestant missionaries first as a boy's school, and then expanded to house a college and incorporate a girl's academy. Bulgarian, Greek and later Armenian students were enrolled in overwhelming numbers - George Washburn (2012) *Fifty Years of Constantinople and Recollections of Robert College*, (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi). Muslim students began to be enrolled in the early 1900's. In the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) a special status for the missionary schools of the Ottoman Empire was negotiated, whereby they kept their status, but came under the control of the National Education Ministry of Turkey in terms of their curriculum and endowments. A rich historical record of the institution can be found in Cyrus Hamlin (2014) *Among the Turks*, (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi); Marcia Stevens and Malcolm Stevens (2012) *Against the Devil's Current: The Life and Times of Cyrus Hamlin*. (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi). George Washburn, *loc. cit.*.

over to the Turkish state and allow it to be transformed into a Turkish public university in 1971.

BU preserved its English language curricula and instruction, while some of its American faculty continued to serve among its departments. By 2019, BU had almost 10.000 undergraduate students, almost half as many graduate students, and 429 full-time faculty members; thus the conversion of its status was successful in allowing it to expand.¹⁰⁵ The quality of education and research also improved as BU became the top pick of 2000 students or so out of around 2 million high school graduates who scored the highest marks in the university entrance examinations each year. Its affordable tuition fees and residential accommodation, scholarly reputation, and English instruction seemed to have attracted students.¹⁰⁶

It is its idiosyncratic origin and development within the Turkish higher educational system, which have often provoked envy and hatred at the same time at the BU. BU has developed an institutional culture emphasizing academic merit, tolerance, and diversity, which is not shared by all universities in the country. The Turkish political system and the government have been changing at first slowly in the early 2000's and then rapidly after 2015 from a democratizing multi-party system to a form of authoritarianism,¹⁰⁷ boasting a style of rule of neo-patrimonial sultanism which has been in practice since 2017¹⁰⁸. It is the personalist, unchecked and unbalanced, arbitrary style of political decision-making by the sultanistic regime that has been perceived as producing a tutelary act to undermine the norms and customs of the BU, and which seems to have precipitated the objections and protests. It is the academic culture of the BU that seemed to be at risk, and it is this threat, which appears to have united the students and the faculty to oppose the decision to appoint a rector without consultation.

Would it not be reasonable to think that such an institution would normally be regarded as an asset for Turkey to be supported and respected by the governing political elites in Turkey? However, after 2016, it has become the target of the AKP government's wrath. Why?

***Kulturkampf* arrives at the Boğaziçi Campus**

Like all post-imperial states, Turkey inherited the polyglot and multi-cultural communities and divisions of the Ottoman Empire. The socio-cultural cleavages that divide Turkish society are mainly based upon confessional communities formed along religious and sectarian (Sunni – orthodox versus Alevi) lines. The majority Sunni

¹⁰⁵ Boğaziçi University (2020). *Facts and Figures 2019* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi University Press).

¹⁰⁶ See for details http://www.boun.edu.tr/Assets/Documents/Dosyalar/sayilarla_bogazici_2019_kitabi_2.pdf.

¹⁰⁷ Ergun Özbudun (2015) "Turkey's judiciary and the drift toward competitive authoritarianism." *The International Spectator* 50(2): 42–55; Kerem Öktem, and Karabekir Akkoyunlu (2016) "Exit from democracy: illiberal governance in Turkey and beyond," *Southeastern European and Black Sea Studies*, 16 (4): 469–480; Murat Somer (2016) "Understanding Turkey's democratic breakdown: old vs. new and indigenous vs. global authoritarianism" *Southeastern European and Black Sea Studies*, 16 (4): 481–503; Ersin Kalaycıoğlu (2017) "Turkish Democratization Falts Again," in Arno Scherzberg, Osman Can, Ilyas Dogan (eds.), *Regierungssysteme im Lichte von "Checks and Balances"*, (Münster, Hamburg, Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2017): 9 – 46; Berk Esen, and Sebnem Gumuscu (2018) "Building a Competitive Authoritarian Regime: State–Business Relations in the AKP's Turkey." *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 20 (4): 349 - 372; Berk Esen and Sebnem Gumuscu (2020). "Why Did Turkish Democracy Collapse? A Political Economy Account of AKP's Authoritarianism." *Party Politics*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068820923722>)

¹⁰⁸ Ersin Kalaycıoğlu (2021). *Halk Yönetimi: Demokrasi ve Popülizm Çatışmasında Dünya*, (Popular Rule: World under the Clash of Democracy and Populism). (Ankara, Turkey: Efil Yayınları): 117 – 121.

Muslim community is also divided between the secularly oriented (Laicists) versus the Islamic Revivalists¹⁰⁹. The Empire also left behind many ethnic communities, out of which the most significant seems to be the Kurds, who roughly constitute about 15-17% of the voting age population¹¹⁰. The ethnic identities also lead to a divide between the ethnic Kurdish nationalist versus ethnic Turkish nationalists in society. These cleavages created a variety of communities and voting blocs that are sharply divided over several valence issues pertaining to culture and its antecedents embedded in history. These divisions translate into the current culture of the country and influence the political socialization of the electorate from their childhood onwards through the curriculum of elementary and secondary education, and the military schools. Different narratives and discourses have taken hold of what constituted the historical record of the Ottoman politics and society abound. These narratives take shape in classes in different educational institutions from religious vocational schools, such as the Imam Hatip Lycées (IHL) to regular high schools or the subject specialist high schools, such as science, fine arts, foreign language instruction programs and the like. Over the last four decades, after the military coup of 1980, the number of students enrolled in the religious vocational schools has increased rapidly. Those schools have been further promoted by the AKP government in the name of providing conservative education to Turkish youth with the aim of creating a preponderance of an Islamic (Sunni) revivalist younger generation in the country.

BU has adopted and implemented a non-inbreeding policy for hiring new faculty, which was followed with few exceptions.¹¹¹ Such a system left little room for discrimination or favoritism by a department chair, dean or rector acting alone on matters of hiring, promoting or firing faculty members. However, that did not stop the attacks of the conservative (Islamic revivalist or ethnic Turkish nationalist) faculty of other universities, journalists, and pundits against the BU, as well as against similar institutions such as the Middle East Technical University and Galatasaray University. Such attacks also seemed to have prompted the wrath of similarly conservative politicians. The decision of the President to appoint the new rector of BU in a political, partisan, and exclusive manner constituted another instance and is a consequence of a long record of *kulturkampf* engulfing the BU.

This debate strikes at the heart of the major *kulturkampf* that has been going on in the debate over the content of the pre-school to postgraduate political socialization in educating Turkey's children, adolescents and young people. The AKP and its leadership have been arguing that they want to re-instate a civilization that they represent, through political/cultural instruction using the official educational institutions. They often express a nostalgic yearning for the political and social systems of an imagined Ottoman-past rejecting what they consider to be a historical conspiracy that undermined these systems in order to erect a secular Republic in their place. They now believe that they have the upper hand in cleansing the secular, rationalist, progressivist, positive science orientation of their nemesis completely from Turkish society and culture. Science education would now be relegated to a minor

¹⁰⁹ See Ersin Kalaycıoğlu (2005) *Turkish Dynamics: A Bridge across Troubled Lands*, (New York, N. Y.: Palgrave Macmillan) for an extensive analysis of socio-cultural cleavages in Turkish society.

¹¹⁰ Ersin Kalaycıoğlu (2018) "Two elections and a political regime in crisis: Turkish politics at the crossroads," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 18 (1): 21- 51.

¹¹¹ Applicants must have a proficiency in English and have to go through a rigorous procedure before securing appointment.

technological skill, and the main source of wisdom and knowledge would become the domain of Sunni religious instruction in all educational programs. Such a move creates a major life-style change for a large swath of Turkish society and seems to have provoked consternation. With the condescending decision of the President it has also provoked opposition in the BU community. BU symbolizes all that AKP dignitaries have loved to hate in Turkish society.

“...I was going to either enroll at Boğaziçi University or the Istanbul Technical University. I first visited Boğaziçi University. I looked at a different world. Different buildings, the area surrounded by walls. There, young men and girls were sitting together in the garden. I was very surprised. I said I'm going to go off the rails here. After that I chose the Technical University...”¹¹² declared Binali Yıldırım¹¹³ in 2013. Yıldırım, as one of the grandees of the AKP, admitted experiencing a culture shock after observing the liberal atmosphere of the BU. He exclaimed how estranged he felt as a young graduate of a high school in a conservative working-class neighborhood of Istanbul (Kasımpaşa). Several other AKP grandees, such as the former PM, AKP leader and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, who earned degrees at the BU, demonstrate ambivalence toward the institution. However, even among those Sunni revivalists who graduated from BU many joined the chorus to condemn the scientific and academic values that BU represented.¹¹⁴ A nativist and nationalist takeover of the campus in the name of democratic pluralism is being touted by the supporters of the move that the Presidency has initiated. This is exactly the clash of values or cultures in the *kulturkampf* in Turkish educational institutions alluded to above.

The clash between the AKP government and its image of conservative education and what BU represents came to a crossroads on 14 July 2021. Through a Presidential decree the rector of the BU, Prof. Dr Melih Bulu, was removed from office¹¹⁵. Prof. M Bulu's rectorship had lasted a little over six months and ended as suddenly as it had begun with a decree of the Presidency. In his place his vice-rector Prof. Dr Naci İnci was instated initially as acting rector and then appointed as the new rector by a Presidential decree on 20 August, 2021¹¹⁶. It had been announced by YÖK that those who had the credentials could apply for the position of BU rector.



On 7 August 2021 BU faculty voted to show their confidence in the candidates who applied for the rector's position¹¹⁷.

¹¹² <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/bu-sozler-sosyal-medyayi-salladi-22471573>.

¹¹³ Binali Yıldırım is a former PM and leader of the AKP (2016 – 2018), former Speaker of the TBMM (2018 – 2019), former Minister of Transportation, Maritime Trade, and Communication, and the current deputy chairman of the AKP.

¹¹⁴ Their main argument had been that Boğaziçi University was governed by an oligarchy masquerading as a democratic form of governance. The culture of Boğaziçi University was non-native and still under the spell of American values. Hilal Kaplan of daily Sabah argued on 2 February 2021 that “...In short, the Boğaziçi oligarchy will be destroyed; instead, a “NATIVE” (*BURALI*) structure, which is pluralistic, democratic and not connected to the US Consulate, will be established. We are experiencing the pain of this transformation...” (<https://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/hilalkaplan/2021/02/02/bogazici-amerikan-etkisinden-arinirken>).

¹¹⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-57844998>.

¹¹⁶ https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2021/gundem/bogazici-ve-marmara-universitelerinin-yeni-rectorleri-belli-oldu-6605074/?utm_source=anasayfa&utm_medium=free&utm_campaign=sol_surmanset

¹¹⁷ <https://m.bianet.org/bianet/egitim/247958-bogazici-nde-guven-oylamasi-sonuclandi>. After the dismissal of the former rector Prof. Bulu, the BU staff, students and alumni registered their preferences by indicating their support for different candidates for the post by means of separately cast ballots. Seventeen candidates received support ranging from 25 to 70 percent of the students, staff, and the alumni, yet acting rector Prof. Dr. Naci İnci, himself a candidate, was not among them. It seemed as if the

The peaceful protests of the faculty and students to the appointment of Prof. Bulu as the rector led to arrests and judicial investigations. But the protests had offered an opportunity for the YÖK and the Presidency to show good governance by taking the views of BU faculty and students as stakeholder into consideration on the question of the appointment of the new rector. However, the Presidency seems to have squandered this opportunity once more by ignoring the support (will) of the stakeholders of the BU, its students, staff, and alumni, and appointing the least favoured candidate as his choice.

Conclusion

Two completely different and irreconcilable understandings of what constitutes academic instruction, research and life are at loggerheads here. One emphasizes inclusive decision-making by the faculty, students, and alumni in the selection of their administrators through a one person, one vote, secret ballot and open tally procedure, which emphasizes academic merit and ethics. This vote of the faculty in making their choice and expressing their support for the rector they want among the candidates is defined as an act of oligarchy by those holding the opposing view. The opposing view is about personal, arbitrary decision-making by an elected President of the country in appointing a rector without any sensitivity toward the Constitution, and the choice of the faculty and the students. Being elected under the emergency measures of 2018, when the opposition could not even campaign effectively, renders President Erdoğan the champion of democracy in the eyes of his supporters. The current political masters of Turkey aver that the President has the legitimate authority to take any decision as he wishes, without paying any attention to the Constitution, the rule of law, the National Assembly, civil liberties, human rights, expert advice, etc.¹¹⁸ Under the circumstances, to see the appointment of the current rector of BU, a public university as the outcome of anything which could be described as a democratic process is, to say the least, stretching of the meaning of the word democracy enormously. Appointing new administrators or faculty at BU connected by partisan ties to the governing party or coalition without any sensitivity to their academic credentials is also an enormous stretch of the meaning of pluralism. One thing is certain though: ignoring the sensitivities and the consent of those who will be influenced as stakeholders by a political decision can hardly be considered an instance of good governance in the twenty-first century.

The *kulturkampf* over valence issues has been undermining the chances of establishing practices of good governance in Turkey's cultural institutions and most specifically its universities. The current efforts of the AKP – MHP government seek to transform educational institutions in line with their concept of 'native', Sunni Islamist and ethnic Turkish nationalist agencies of indoctrination. Such a move would sever the ties of the universities of Turkey with global scientific communities, universal ethical standards in the natural and social sciences, humanities, and arts: this is provoking concerns, as well as tensions and stresses in these institutions. It is at Boğaziçi University that such tensions and stresses have come to the foreground and created a sustained reaction since the appointment of Prof. Melih Bulu as rector in

President appointed the candidate who received the least support from the students (1.3%), staff (12.6%) and alumni (3%), namely the acting rector Prof. İnci as the new rector of the BU.

¹¹⁸ The Speaker of the Turkish Grand National Assembly announced that the President had the right to take any decision to withdraw Turkey from any treaty, i.e. a position which could even call into question the legitimate existence of the Turkish Republican nation-state (<https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2021/gundem/tbmm-baskani-mustafa-sentoptan-montro-aciklamasi-6341514/>)

January 2021, and which seem to have persisted after the appointment of the new rector Prof. Naci İnci in August 2021.

The peaceful protests at Boğaziçi University emphasizing the justice of the faculty and the students' demands that the Constitution, University Act no. 2547 and established academic norms be respected in the appointment of the top administration of the University have attained one of their goals with the removal on 15 July 2021 of the partisan/political appointment of Bulu. However, the dénouement of this administrative move by the Presidency has amounted to nothing more than a slight correction of the earlier decision, something which has developed into a pattern with most decrees of the Presidency¹¹⁹. The AKP leadership is vehemently determined to retain the authority to make all decisions in all the sectors which fall under their jurisdiction, but does not want to take any responsibility for decisions which fail to secure the approval of the stakeholders to whom they applied. Even when their decisions cause serious disasters, for example, when many die in a botched rescue operation in northern Iraq, or forest fires burn without any effective firefighting activity on the part of the government authorities, or when floods take hundreds of lives because of poor decisions about the construction of roads, bridges and buildings – the AKP government and its leadership take no responsibility. They even go to extremes in blaming the opposition for creating fake news and disseminating lies and threaten to imprison many who criticize the government for failed decision-making in those cases. It is not an exaggeration to argue that the current neo-patrimonial sultanism as practised in Turkish politics is based on a style of political decision-making by government which takes place without any checks and balances or without paying due heed to laws, regulations, science or scientific ethics. It is *ad hoc* decision-making based upon personal, arbitrary criteria combined with the decision-maker's concerns over their political career or personal interests and taking no responsibility for the consequences of ill thought out or badly executed decisions¹²⁰. Therefore, what the AKP government and its leadership cannot accept is any semblance of control, checking and balancing, or even the slightest pushback by the opposition or voters. Any substantial change in that pattern of governance for the government in the face of the peaceful protests and demands of the BU faculty and students was certainly not to be expected and would have been astonishing if it had occurred.

In conclusion, the saga of the appointment of the rector of Boğaziçi University has reinforced the same pattern of governance on the part of a neo-patrimonial sultanist regime. The BU protests had little impact in other university campuses except for a few sporadic instances at the beginning. It is therefore still highly unlikely that events at BU will lead to any change in the government's relationship with the academic world from one of patrimonial political decision-making by personal fiat of the President to one in which the university stakeholders may exercise academic freedom to take their own administrative decisions with autonomy from partisan politics.



¹¹⁹ See Kemal Gözler (2019) as in note 1

¹²⁰ For a more thorough analysis of the current political regime and government of Turkey see Ersin Kalaycıoğlu (2021): 110–131, and 134–138.



INTERVIEW

with

Tilbe Saran

Actress, Writer and Director

conducted by

Gareth Winrow



+

Tilbe first performed on stage in the play *Run for Your Life* at the Dornen theatre in 1986. She here received the first of her many awards for acting. While working at the Istanbul Municipal Theatre, she performed in plays such as *King Lear*, *Uncle Vanya* and *Tartuffe*. For her role in the film *Zenne Dancer* in 2011, Tilbe received the Best Supporting Actress Award at the 48th Golden Orange Film Festival. Her other recent performances include starring in the film, *Drawers* and in the television series 'Seref Meselesi' (*Matter of Respect*). A close friend of my wife since childhood, I have had the pleasure to know Tilbe over the last forty years.

Q How did you become an actress?

A Up until primary school, I had a lonely childhood in a nice, quiet neighborhood of Istanbul during the sixties. My parents were working very hard so I was all alone with my grandma. My father, born in İzmir, from a Cretan expatriated family, was a lawyer. My mother, born in İstanbul, graduated from Ankara Law School, then went to the States and got her PHD from the Sociology and Anthropology Department of St Louis University and founded the Anthropology Department in İstanbul University with an Australian anthropologist Prof. Hart. So, I didn't have any relatives or friends of my age to play with. Therefore, I used to paint my fingers and toes to make imaginary friends. Then at the kindergarten, I found real friends and puppets, which both mesmerized me. And after that I always sought out that unique sense of the pleasure of 'playing'. To live in a magical world in which everything is possible. No limits of time or place. Later on, as I was just about to graduate from a French high school, I set my mind on pursuing a career in the social sciences. At that time, we were rehearsing for our school play at the Kenter Theatre. There, I saw a bunch of young actors working on Brian Friel's *Philadelphia, Here I Come*. Suddenly the sensational pleasure and the feeling of freedom that I used to have while playing with puppets, rushed back to my memory like the madeleine cake mentioned in Proust's *A la Recherche Du Temps Perdu*. And that's how I decided to study acting at the Municipal Conservatory of Istanbul.

Q. Who, in the theatre, has had the most impact on your career?

A. In the early years of my journey, definitely my acting teacher, Yıldız Kenter, was a remarkable mentor and an extraordinary actress who had a major impact on my career. Her mother was descended from a British actor's family. During the First World War she had lost her first husband and she had a hard time trying to cope all alone in London with her son. One day a young Turkish diplomat saw her riding in a park, and they fell in love immediately. So, they came to Ankara, got married and had four

children. The Second World War began and this time the still young Ankara government had banned its foreign service officers from marrying foreigners. So, they were forced to have a divorce. But they didn't accept this. These were very difficult times for the family. Yıldız Kenter, the second child of the Kenter family, decided to become an actress after graduating from high school and she took the exams for the Ankara Conservatory which was established by the new Republic of Turkey. It was a boarding school and free. The majority of the teachers were from Germany and Austria who had escaped the Nazis. She graduated *cum laude* and started to work immediately in the National Theatre.



In the mid-sixties she moved to İstanbul with her brother who also became an actor and started up a private theatre company called Kenter which had a huge influence on the history of Turkish theatre. Meanwhile Yıldız Kenter started to teach for the İstanbul Municipal Conservatory.

I met her at the beginning of the 1980s just after the military coup d'état.

And she became my idol. While I was still studying, I worked in her company for two years. Then a couple of years passed, and I became a member of the İstanbul Municipal Theatre. There I met with brilliant actors and directors with whom I collaborated for a very long period.

Unfortunately, in 1993 our current president won the elections of the municipality of İstanbul and became the mayor of the city. I felt the first signs of censorship, so I resigned and became a freelance actress.

We founded a small company sponsored by a private bank and produced seven plays. All of these plays were translated and staged for the first time in Turkey. At the same time, I worked with different companies and worked in television serials.

Q. How has the theatre in Turkey changed in the time that you have been an actress?

A. I became professional during the mid-1980s. It was right after the coup d'état, so State and Municipal theatres, which are directly attached to the government, were by no means autonomous. They are still not! The only chance you get to be able to make a living through acting was to work in one of those private companies based mostly in İstanbul. I took that chance. And, of course, I did lots of voiceovers in order to survive. Among other things I liked working with children and doing Creative Drama. Together with your wife, Nazan, we started the first drama lessons for kids. By 1987, the effects and pressures of the coup d'état were slowly weakening so I became a member of the İstanbul Municipal Theatre. Soon after, private television channels started to appear, which offered us, actors, a whole new media to explore.

Q. I believe you were initially reluctant to appear in television series in Turkey, but then later starred in several shows. How do you think the success of certain television series in Turkey (the 'dizi') has impacted on the theatre?

A. As I said, it was a total new media for Turkey. These TV channels were far from being well-structured. And the working conditions were very brutal. Yet, it was well paid, so for many actors they became a lifesaver. But, at the same time, they have become a threat for theatres for a very long time because many well-known actors stopped doing theatre.

However, in time, because of the new private university theatre departments, schools and courses, lots of young, talented and well-educated people filled the field. They wanted to tell their own stories. Those progressive companies have started to animate the theatre life of İstanbul. Especially after the 'Gezi' events, theatres became the centre of resistance. Until the pandemic, every night approximately two hundred and fifty plays were being staged all over the city.

Q. What has been the impact of the AKP government on the theatre in Turkey?

A. It has been a disaster!!! As I mentioned, after the Gezi movement, theatre became the only places of resistance. Widespread self-censorship infected every soul. Imagine: Memet Ali Alabora (a very well-known actor and the ex-president of the Actor's Union) and his wife, Pınar Ögün (a very young, talented and well known actress) were judged and sentenced to imprisonment for 2985 years!!!! But small companies in tiny venues were a breath of fresh air for all of us. Most TV channels sponsored by the government banned lots of actors who supported the Gezi movement. Many old and important theatres were deprived of any financial support. Many actors are being investigated for supposed tax evasion.

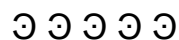


Q. How has lockdown because of the pandemic impacted the theatre in Turkey?

A. Very badly. Neither the public theatres nor the private companies were prepared for this kind of disaster. Acting was always considered a sort of 'amateur' job, like a hobby in small companies. So none of their participants had social security. As a matter of fact, there is a very famous line in a well-known Turkish play which says "iki kalas bir heves" – you need only two pieces of timber and enthusiasm to make theatre. This is such an internalized idea that even very famous actors work free of charge, or with a very low budget. But with the pandemic, not being able to perform at all threw everything off balance. So, many small theatres have had to close down after the lockdowns.

Q. What do you think will happen to the theatre in Turkey in the foreseeable future?

A. I have no idea!



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CENTO: Failed or Successful Alliance of the Cold War?

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On 14 July 1958, there was a military coup in Iraq led by Brigadier Kassem. The new military regime did not immediately withdraw from the Baghdad Pact but it no longer participated in the work of the alliance. On 24 March 1959, Kassem withdrew Iraq from the alliance and on 19 August 1959 it was announced in Ankara that the 'Baghdad Pact' was henceforth to be known as the 'Central Treaty Organisation' (CENTO).¹²¹ Apart from Iraq's withdrawal, the membership remained unchanged: Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and Britain, with the US an associate member.¹²² CENTO survived until 1979 when Iran withdrew on 11 March following the Islamic revolution. Iran claimed that CENTO 'only protected interests of the imperialist states'. Pakistan followed suit on 12 March, because it believed that 'the organisation was not able to protect Pakistan's security' and the next day Turkey proclaimed that 'CENTO had in effect lost its function in the region'.¹²³

When CENTO was first established as the Baghdad Pact in 1955, it was a conventional military alliance in a climate of acute international tension. However, this atmosphere began to change significantly after 1955. Although there seemed to be no tangible evidence of a change in Soviet expansion politics, the rising power of China constituted a problem for Moscow and gave a strong reason to achieve its goals more securely by diplomatic and economic pressures supported by armed strength than risking a possible outright military conflict involving the United States.¹²⁴

Similarly, the United States had its own reasons, both domestic and foreign, to seek a compromise with the Soviet Union. As a result, the 1970s showed what could be called a 'tug of peace' between the Soviet and American super-powers. In the event of a Soviet victory, Moscow would destroy the Western alliance in NATO; and in the case of a United States triumph, Washington would be able sufficiently to disengage from overseas military commitments in Asia and Europe to revitalise American power and freedom of manoeuvre.¹²⁵

It was natural for these changes in the international setting to have an effect on CENTO. Its regional members – i.e. Turkey, Iran and Pakistan – no longer had any real fears of an armed Soviet attack, and they had in fact made great improvements

¹²¹ For further information on alliance formation and the origins of alliances see Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

¹²² Behçet Kemal Yeşilbursa, *The Baghdad Pact: Anglo-American Defence Policies in the Middle East, 1950-1959*, (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 200-216.

¹²³ The National Archives, UK (hereafter TNA), FCO9/2891/WST022/1, "Telegram from Tehran to FCO", 15 March 1979. TNA-FCO9/2891/WST022/1, "Telegram from Ankara to FCO" 15 March 1979. TNA-FCO9/2891/WST022/1, "Telegram from FCO to Ankara, Tehran, Islamabad, Washington", 14 March 1979.

¹²⁴ See Yeşilbursa, *The Baghdad Pact*, passim.

¹²⁵ Guy Hadley, *CENTO: The Forgotten Alliance*, (Sussex: University of Sussex, 1971), p. 36.

in their relations with the USSR. The alliance lost any military credibility it may once have had as a defence against aggression.

It was Pakistan who had a pivotal role in the continuation of the organization. Here, the conflict with India dominated all other foreign issues, hence the attitude to CENTO was distinctly cool and Pakistani public opinion was angered by the lack of support from CENTO in the fighting between India and Pakistan in 1965 and in 1971. This was despite the fact that CENTO had neither a treaty mandate nor the military resources to intervene even if the other members had wished to do so. Therefore, Pakistan ceased to take part in CENTO military exercises and the Foreign Minister stopped participating in the Council meetings. When asked why it had not withdrawn from CENTO despite its grievances, its spokesmen usually replied that this was because Turkey and Iran had urged it to remain. Nevertheless, it is doubtful that the Pakistani Government would have chosen to stay in CENTO unless it felt that membership gave them significant advantages.¹²⁶

The Turkish government regarded CENTO as a contribution to stability in a sensitive area. Iran saw the organization as a 'club', membership of which provided some modest but useful benefits. In the event of Pakistan withdrawing, it could still have been possible for CENTO to continue with the membership of Turkey, Iran, Britain and the support of the United States. However, at that time it was difficult to anticipate what their decisions would be should that happen.¹²⁷

Whatever the case, in the 1970s the value of CENTO was measured in terms of its contribution to the development of its regional members. Indeed, the main concern was whether CENTO still had such a role. The alternatives were either to dissolve it completely; or to relinquish its military functions and turn it into an organization concerned only with economic cooperation and development, which might attract a wider participation.¹²⁸

Although CENTO did not have an effective role as a defence alliance, its military assets were not to be overlooked. It still offered the regional members a connection with NATO and some consideration of their defence in the Western nuclear deterrent. But this was not so important for Turkey, who was already a member of NATO, and for Pakistan it had probably lost importance because of CENTO's lack of support Pakistan in the fighting with India. However, it may still have had some significance for Iran. It was also doubtful whether the bilateral defence treaties concluded by the US with Turkey, Iran and Pakistan under CENTO auspices would be maintained, in a climate of 'détente', if CENTO itself vanished. Moreover, the participation of the three regional members in CENTO staff planning and joint exercises gave them useful access to Western military techniques and equipment, while Britain also gained from over-flying rights and training facilities.¹²⁹

The importance of serving the development needs of the region was recognised in CENTO early on, and it proved capable of adapting itself to these demands in a way not always found in other international organisations. If the regional members felt that their new association, known as Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD),¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Hadley, *CENTO*, p. 29.

¹²⁷ Panagiotis Dimitrakis, *Failed Alliances of the Cold War*, (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), pp. 39-83.

¹²⁸ Dimitrakis, *Failed Alliances of the Cold War*, pp. 39-83.

¹²⁹ Hadley, *CENTO*, pp. 7-8.

¹³⁰ See Behçet Kemal Yeşilbursa, 'The Formation of RCD: Regional Co-operation for Development', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 45:4, 637-660.

allowed them to dispose of CENTO, they were entitled to do so. However, it would be advisable for them to wait until the practical value of RCD had been more fully established before they made such a decision.

In April 1964, the regional members of CENTO decided to hold periodical meetings at ministerial level. The governments of the United Kingdom and the United States were informed of this agreement at the time of the CENTO Ministerial Council Meeting in Washington in April 1964. The first meeting was held in Ankara on 3 and 4 July 1964, during which it was decided to set up an organization to promote economic, technical and cultural cooperation between the three countries, outside the framework of CENTO. This decision was approved of by the Heads of State meeting in Istanbul on 20 and 21 July 1964, and the RCD was established.

It was largely their dissatisfaction with CENTO that led them to form this new organization, although other motives might have been the Shah's desire to gain political, domestic and international prestige from this diplomatic initiative; President Ayub's feeling of bitterness towards the West over India; Turkey's frustration over Cyprus; the general desire of all three countries to show their independence, though not to the extent that would require them to resort to CENTO; and a conviction that they might really be able to benefit economically from the new organization.

The keynote of CENTO development projects was the encouragement of regional cooperation, both by professional interests and by governments, in areas of daily life where justice was not only done, but seen to be done. This produced personal contacts and shared experience which would not easily be sustained without CENTO. The need to use CENTO as a framework for cooperation in regional economic development was recognised at the first meeting of the Council of Ministers in November 1955, following the conclusion of the Baghdad Pact. The Council established an Economic Committee to develop the economic and financial resources of the region. The priority adopted by CENTO was to develop regional links by roads, ports and rail, and by telecommunications. As an example, a new highway and railway linking Turkey, Iran and Pakistan was completed by the mid-1970s. Moreover, the modernisation and enlargement of the old Turkish ports at Trabzon in the Black Sea and at Iskenderun in the Eastern Mediterranean had been completed by the mid-1960s. CENTO had also built a microwave radio-telephone network which was the longest system of its kind in the world in 1960s. These projects had provided CENTO with a modern system of military communications linking Turkey, Iran and Pakistan with each other, with London, and with NATO.

The CENTO brand also had a certain value for the regional partners, especially Iran and Pakistan, in allowing them to have some military and economic contacts with the United States and Britain. If these were concluded bilaterally, it could have implied a stronger identity with the Western side than those countries would have been willing to display publicly.¹³¹

The CENTO development programme contributed to the raising of living standards far more than its modest expenditure might have suggested. For example, in the year 1969/70, Britain provided over £1 million for CENTO's development projects. The US provided more substantial economic aid and technical assistance. As the regional countries were well aware, it was still possible for stability to be endangered by a change of Soviet policy and the Soviet Union's return to the more basic methods of

¹³¹ Dimitrakis, *Failed Alliances of the Cold War*, pp. 39-83, 135-185.

subversion and disruption. This was an extra reason for caution before dissolving CENTO, given the group's contacts with the United States and Britain.¹³²

If CENTO had not existed, it would not have been necessary to invent it by the 1970s. However, it was hard to see what would be gained by getting rid of it. Even simply as a 'club' with the regional members enjoying some benefits through membership, unlike other organizations it still worked and was economically viable.¹³³ It was also equally difficult to imagine an economic substitute able to operate as CENTO did or the same kind of voluntary cooperation by its regional members together with support from Britain and the United States. There remained the possibility of removing the military elements of CENTO and keeping its purely economic and technical work, either under the label of CENTO, or, as the regional partners might have preferred, by absorbing it in their own RCD.¹³⁴

For Britain, neither alternative would offer compensation for the loss of British over-flying rights and training facilities provided through the military channels of CENTO. For the United States, given its frame of mind of that time, a military termination of the CENTO Treaty was probably seen as a welcome opportunity to put an end to the American security and defence agreements concluded bilaterally with Iran, Turkey and Pakistan in 1959.¹³⁵

If CENTO had failed to adapt to the changed circumstances in a climate of 'détente', very few would have been sad to see it go. However, because it provided a viable means to solve common regional problems, there needed to be a good case for not retaining it. To dissolve CENTO unilaterally might have pleased some Western sides who believed that the organisation was doomed to fail; however, it would serve only Soviet ambitions and interests in a divided world. While CENTO had no effective role as a defensive alliance, its economic assets should not be ignored.

The question today is whether it is possible for the countries in the region, especially Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, to form regional cooperation on the lines of the Baghdad and Saadabad Pacts in the fields of security (particularly border security and terrorism), commerce, and culture. It does not seem possible, because one (the Saadabad Pact¹³⁶) was the product of the interwar period, and the other (the Baghdad Pact) of the Cold War. However, the countries of the region need to explore new opportunities for cooperation in terms of security, as well as economic, trade, cultural and social issues. Such steps should be beneficial for the countries of the region as well as for those beyond. It is clear that Turkey is the only country in the region able to achieve such a feat, given its historical mission as a regional leader, a legacy of its Ottoman past. However, Turkey needs also to ensure that its own unity and integrity are prioritised. How effective it can be in the region, particularly given its economic

¹³² Hadley, *CENTO*, pp. 18-22.

¹³³ Dimitrakis, *Failed Alliances of the Cold War*, pp. 39-83, 135-185.

¹³⁴ Hadley, *CENTO*, pp. 7-8.

¹³⁵ Dimitrakis, *Failed Alliances of the Cold War*, pp. 71-83.

¹³⁶ The Treaty of Saadabad (or the Saadabad Pact) was a non-aggression pact signed by Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan on July 8, 1937 and lasted for five years. The treaty was signed in Tehran's Saadabad Palace and was part of an initiative spearheaded by King Mohammed Zahir Shah of Afghanistan. Ratifications were exchanged in Tehran on June 25, 1938, and the treaty became effective on the same day. It was registered in *League of Nations Treaty Series* on July 19, 1938. In 1943, the treaty was automatically extended for a further five years because none of the signatories had renounced it. See *League of Nations Treaty Series*, Vol. 190, pp. 22-27.

and social problems, as well as those of security and terrorism, must be open for debate.

After the coup d'état of 1958 in Iraq, the United States tried to fill the resulting vacuum by signing separate bilateral agreements with Turkey, Iran and Pakistan on 5 March 1959. According to these agreements, should there be an attack on Turkey, Iran or Pakistan, the United States agreed to give any kind of requested assistance, including military force within the framework of the Eisenhower Doctrine. However, this did not bring about a new guarantee for extra military assistance for Turkey, a member state of NATO. It would soon become clear that even Iran and Pakistan would not receive adequate military and economic assistance. These agreements were actually concluded to prevent what happened in Iraq occurring in other countries. In other words, they were made against internal threats rather than external ones.¹³⁷

Since these bilateral agreements were signed under CENTO, which was dissolved in 1979, are they still valid? When the revolution took place in Iran in 1979, the Iranian government ended their participation in CENTO. However, nothing was mentioned of the bilateral agreements signed between the United States, Turkey and Pakistan.

CENTO did not have a military command like NATO. Cooperation between the member states on defence and security issues was envisaged only. CENTO was solely responsible for the compliance, planning, training and materials of the member states' defence policies. Cooperation in defence and security was dependent on special agreements between the member states. Among members, only Britain announced that it could use some of its forces (in Cyprus) to support CENTO. The United States had no special obligation to CENTO. However, CENTO members conducted an annual large-scale naval exercise called Mid-link in the Persian Gulf. An annual air exercise called 'Şahbaz' was also held, as were search and rescue exercises.¹³⁸

In comparison with the Baghdad Pact, CENTO was around much longer and probably would have continued if there had been no revolution in Iran. It was an alliance that brought together pro-Western countries within the framework of US and British strategies in the Middle East. In the cases of the Baghdad Pact, CENTO, and RCD, the United States succeeded in encouraging secular Turkey to join organisations with Islamic countries. These were the only organisations of that period that housed Turkey with third-world countries under the same roof. However, CENTO was not a typical third world organization. It had Britain as a member and was supported by the United States. Indeed it does not seem possible to form an organisation such as CENTO or Saadabad Pact between the countries in the region (particularly between Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran) without the blessings of great powers

Is CENTO a forgotten organization? Yes, especially during the détente period, that is, after the Cuban crisis of 1962. Was it a successful organization? In terms of economic, cultural and technical cooperation: **yes**; but in the military field: **no**.

In the 1930s, German and Italian aggression, and the interests of Britain and the Soviet Union, had made possible the formation of the Saadabad Pact. In the 1950s, although there was a perceived threat from the Soviet Union, the Baghdad Pact had been founded principally to support the interests of Britain and its allies in the Middle East.

¹³⁷ See Yeşilbursa, *The Baghdad Pact*, passim.

¹³⁸ Dimitrakis, *Failed Alliances of the Cold War*, pp. 71-83. Hadley, *CENTO*, pp. 7-8.

CENTO survived much of the Cold War era. It had weathered the storms of modern upheaval, despite the efforts of its enemies, and even some of its friends, to pronounce it dead and buried. Like the French politician who was asked what he did during the French Revolution, CENTO could reply: '*J'ai vécu*' – 'I lived'.



International Migration of Highly Educated, Stay-at-home Mothers:

The Case of the United Kingdom

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of highly educated mothers with at least one child who had left their jobs and immigrated to the UK in support of their husbands' employment. The study investigates the barriers that these Turkish women faced in the UK. Interviews were held with twenty Turkish participants who met the research criteria. Integrating these findings with relevant international migration theories, this research reveals that those highly educated Turkish women with advanced career success who took part in this research have not managed to break the cycle of traditional gender roles. These women have taken care of their children and have established a harmonious family environment to assist their husbands' careers. This study's findings show that moving to the UK with their spouses inevitably has resulted in a decline not only in the participants' career success, but also in their financial and social status.

Introduction

In the era of globalisation, more people are moving worldwide and migrating to other countries because the world is more connected due to advanced telecommunications, more accessible transportation opportunities and an unprecedented extension of goods and capital markets. Castles, De Haas and Miller have defined this phenomenon as the "era of immigration"¹³⁹. Generally, people are trying to move to countries that are more developed than their own.

The UK has been a significant target country for immigrants for various reasons. An increase in the number of immigrants had been observed in the last fifty years, with a high growth especially in the last fifteen years. Immigrants from Europe who were using their rights to move freely came to the UK. In December 2019, about 715,000

¹³⁹ Stephen Castles, Hein De Haas, and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, 5th. Ed. 2014).

individuals had immigrated to the UK, whereas about 403,000 individuals had emigrated from the UK¹⁴⁰.

The preference for staying at home requires self-sacrifice at many levels. DeSimone defines the highly qualified stay-at-home mothers as ones bearing the sense of guilt by focusing only on their families instead of combining career and family commitments. According to DeSimone, these women also face a conflict of roles between being a babysitter and being successful in their careers¹⁴¹.

Research Purpose and Method

In this study, with regard to the experiences of highly qualified immigrant mothers, the following questions were posed: What were the main reasons for the mother's preference for staying at home? What was the impact of immigration on their career? How did being economically dependent on their spouse affect the lives of these mothers? How did staying at home together with their child/children following immigration affect these mothers, given that they had been actively working prior to immigration? What were their positive experiences following their decision to stay at home? A qualitative research method was used to answer these questions and to understand and interpret the social and economic positions of these women.

The study utilised in-depth interviews conducted online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In all, twenty highly educated Turkish mothers with at least one child who had left their jobs and immigrated to the UK because of their spouses' jobs agreed to take part in the study. Social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn etc.) platforms were used in recruiting these twenty participants, who were adjudged to meet the research criteria. Rapport was built via WhatsApp conversations and phone calls and online Zoom invitations were sent for interviews at a time and date that suited the participants. Interviews were conducted between 28 October 2020 and 3 December 2020. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym in order to preserve their privacy.

Making use of the theoretical literature, semi-structured interview questions were formulated. Data collection means were approved by the university's ethical committee. Thematic analysis was used to examine the qualitative interview data. The analysis involved data categorization and coding.

Participants' Demographic Characteristics

The participants were twenty highly educated Turkish stay-at-home mothers who had immigrated to the UK on account of their husbands' career commitments. The women were aged between 30 and 53. They were living in the UK, along with their spouses and children. Sixteen of the participants had decided to immigrate – to the UK – for the first time, and the other four had settled in the UK after living in different countries. The majority of the participants (twelve individuals) resided in London with their families. Four of the participants had lived in the UK for 0-1 years, five of them for 1-2 years, seven for 3-4 years, and four for more than 5 years. Eight of these had a master's degree, one had a doctorate, and the remaining eleven had first degrees from various universities. They had professional careers before moving to the UK. Five of them were teachers, three were engineers, three were bankers, three were managers

¹⁴⁰ Mike James, "Migration Statistics Quarterly Report," *Office for National Statistics*, 2020, August 27, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/migrationstatisticsquarterlyreport/august2020>.

¹⁴¹ Susan Donley DeSimone, *Exploring the Effects of Guilt, Spousal Support and Role Conflict on the Psychological Well-Being of the Educated Full-Time Stay at Home Mother* (San Diego, CA: University of San Diego Press, 2001).

at private companies, two were academics, one was a medical doctor, another a dentist, one an architect, and one a public officer. All were highly qualified individuals who worked in successful careers in Turkey (one in Germany) and they came from similar cultural/social backgrounds. In this study, 'stay-at-home' mothers refer to those who have abandoned their professional careers to live abroad. In some cases, they were able to work from home, but they worked in jobs which did not reflect their professional status.

Findings

In analysing the data, the focus was on identifying common themes to help the researcher gain better insights into the participants' experiences. These included: the motive for immigration, challenges as experienced by the participants in the UK, and reasons behind mothers' preference for remaining at home.

The motive for immigration

The furthering of their spouses' careers, and the importance placed on their children's education were the main reasons why these participants chose to immigrate to the UK. Fatma, one of the participants, was among those who considered her children's future. According to her:

"I always used to feel a bit different than normal people. I felt like I didn't belong to my country much. And as I always had the problem of foreign language in my life, my dream was to ensure my children have an education in a foreign country. In this direction, we decided to come here."

Ezgi, on the other hand, was one of those who never wanted to immigrate. But she made it to England because of her spouse. According to Ezgi:

"I'm not a woman who likes to live away from her family, away from her mother and father and loved ones. I visited other countries a lot, but it was just for touristic intentions. I never intended and wished to settle."

And Sevda noted:

"I didn't speak to him (my spouse) for a week, and I cried for a week. I could never accept to go outside of Istanbul. I didn't accept it, but I also didn't want to wait for my spouse. Because I didn't want the people to tell me later that I couldn't have a better life due to my hesitation. And I also didn't want to leave my spouse alone. Because he was thinking that we would have a better future here after living abroad for a while. I faced a tough transition period. (...) Then I said, okay, let's head-on."

Challenges as Experienced by the Participants

Nearly all the participants had hard times when they came to the UK for the first time. The majority had difficulty finding the support they required, with their spouses working and with them staying at home with their children. They noted that perhaps one of the most challenging parts of living abroad was being distant from their comfort zones in Turkey and their families and the environment that may support them. For instance, Elif expressed the problems of both being with a small child and working abroad as follows:

"When I look back, I'm thinking about how I did it. You're right. Of course, one is handling everything faced in that period. That was very hard for me. I was experiencing working abroad for the first time. For instance, people generally try to go abroad when they are young. I was 34. Okay, it was not too late, but I had difficulty. My spouse was already

continuously travelling. And this time, he started to go to other countries. And we again became unable to see each other."

Reasons Behind Mothers' Preference for Staying at Home

The participants said they were very interested in furthering their careers, but they were obliged to stay at home to meet the demands of childcare. However, they are concerned about losing their skills due to the break in their professional lives. For instance, Fatma, who was an interior architect, explained that she wanted to work in the UK and keep up with her career, and added:

"I don't know when I'll be able to master this foreign language. I need a bit more time. Especially in my profession, it is required to be at a specific level. No matter how old I am. I stuck up on my dreams. That is to say, and I want to perform my profession in here too."

Hatice, a teacher with two children, said that she felt like having fallen into chaos because of a change of country. Faced with a lack of social life, she said the following with regards to working again:

"In here, I tried to apply to a job once, but the hours are very different. I don't know who will take care of the children. Even if I leave one of them to someone who will take the other from school? That is to say; you have to think of everything. There are no close friends. Due to not having anyone to trust, we finally decided that I should take care of them."

Some of the participants had worked in various positions in the UK, but often they were over-qualified for these jobs. Nevertheless, they had been able to work in a foreign country. Some participants had to resign from these jobs as they did not want to neglect their family due to the inflexible working conditions. The women were especially desperate with regard to their children. Dependent for support on their spouses, they became their children's primary carers.

Conclusion

Some of these highly qualified women, immigrating to the UK by accompanying their spouses, became stuck in the lowest part of the labour market. A series of intertwined factors (inability to find a good job, lack of a foreign language, and some personal reasons) contribute to the challenges faced by these women who also have childcare responsibilities.

The high-priced childcare service in the UK when compared to Turkey has been a problem. The mothers have thus opted to stay at home to care for their children and this has had a negative impact on their careers.

The repeated moving with their spouses is also having a negative effect on these women. The study findings suggest that among married couples, priority is often given to the career expectations of the husband and the migration of family is associated with the husbands' career development. With the women unable to pursue successful careers, there is here a loss of human and social capital.

Another significant factor contributing to the challenges faced by the participants in this study is that of social gender roles. These roles seem to be the most influential factor in familial decisions among Turkish immigrant couples. Turkish social gender norms provide more power for the husband in a patriarchal family system. Contrary to

the advocates of the power of marriage theory, these husbands are not required to bring in more valuable resources¹⁴².

The findings of this study suggest that highly qualified Turkish women with children and a career who migrate to the UK along with their spouses seem to be unable to break the chains of traditional social gender roles. They are not only undertaking childcare responsibilities but are also assisting the careers of their spouses in order to maintain a harmonious family environment. As a result, they are facing a regression in their career and socio-economic status.

The UK government must better understand the problems faced by highly qualified immigrant women and develop policies to ensure their labour participation. Social cohesion is also as important as participation in the job market. For this reason, various activities should be organised by local administrations for such women to extend their social networks. More opportunities should be provided for immigrant women regarding language (including business English). Training and seminars can also be organised to enable them to refresh their business-related skills, and opportunities should be provided for them to meet with prospective employers.



“Our tools include breath, tone, touch, imagery and vocal improvisation. Using these tools, we give voice to what we hear and what we feel.”

Nihan Devocioğlu,
The Essence of Voice ¹⁴³



Nihan Devocioğlu

THE NOSTALGIA PROJECT

Ateş Orga

Anglo-Turkish music critic &
record producer,
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“It all starts with one glimpse, you were here and there ... I remember everything” – the opening of *This is My Home Now* by the Turkish singer, experimentalist, performer and songwriter Nihan Devocioğlu, from her debut album, *Ozean*.¹⁴⁴ Flashback autumn 2001. My studio in one of the Maçka towers of Istanbul Technical University. A cream-walled neo-classical room overlooking the Bosphorus, black piano in the corner. Just the one postgraduate that afternoon, a slight girl of intellect and curiosity, determinedly free-wheeling. Nihan. Seminar put aside, we spend a couple of hours talking – about ourselves, about the arts, sunlight streaming through tall windows, the big tankers and rusting ships from places north steering their way from the Black Sea through the Marmara down the Dardanelles to the Aegean, then the Mediterranean. At dusk we part, she descending shadowed marble stairs, just the one look back, a half-smile. The last of my Istanbul students, our time too brief.

¹⁴² Edward S. Shihadeh, ‘The Prevalence of Husband-Centered Migration: Employment Consequences for Married Mothers’, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 53, no.2 (1991), pp. 432–44.

¹⁴³ Vocal Workshop, mission statement.

¹⁴⁴ *Ozean*, Whatabout Music WAM 103, produced by Dave Bianchi & Nihan Devocioğlu, released February 2019.

Years later, behind her half-a-decade at the Salzburg Mozarteum, we met up again in Istanbul, and once for dinner in London. Still the same imaginative wanderer, prospecting the old, the new, the fantastically exotic. Ever listening to ‘other-world’ vocals, to throat singing, to ancestral voices from central Asia, to the great melting pot of the White Sea of the Ottomans – the Mediterranean. In tireless search of invigorating mediums. Curating the unexpected. Performing, recording. Disappearing down hot, narrow Istanbul hill streets to meet an adventurous luthier ...

A while back her appearances with the Barcelona Gypsy Klezmer Orchestra (as it then was)¹⁴⁵ revealed the kind of diverse luminary she is, a supremely gifted artist entrenched, she says, “in a search for understanding across cultural boundaries”. Her hunting grounds embrace all roads, from opera and early European repertory to world music, Sufism and dynasties of Balkan song. Nationalist, ethnic and religious obstructions, political and social constructions, gender distinctions, play no part in her work. Tracks in the second of her multi-racial Barcelona albums, *Nihan & The Singing Camels*,¹⁴⁶ demonstrate upfront rhythmic vitality and facility. But if you want her at her most beautiful, spiritually and physically, trance-like in body language and gaze yet as choreographically tensioned as a ‘spice-laden’ mountain gazelle, then it’s to the slower material we must turn. Such numbers communicate freely through descants, improvisation and emotional inflection, through the delicacy and spot-lit colours of pared-down instrumental commentary: the finesse of story-telling through crystalline diction and ultra-moderated *vibrato*. It takes high art to sing a slow song, to deliver the soul through ever subtler veins of *Sprechgesang*. In a *stran* like *Malan Barkir* – a Kurdish Alevi lyric lamenting the Dersim deaths (1937-38) which she transforms into a long ballade where earth meets sky and the dying and displaced find solace in a lapis lazuli infinity beyond the *ewran* – I am reminded of the musician-magicians of North African tribal tradition casting tales and spells across sand and sea.

Correspondingly the snowbound *yoikers* of the Sámi ‘sun people’ of Norway, Sweden, Russia and Finland astride the Arctic Circle. More than twenty years ago Ursula Länsman of the band Angelit, a reindeer herder these days, identified this music as attempting “to capture its subject in its entirety: it’s like a holographic, multi-dimensional living image, a replica, not just a flat photograph or simple visual memory. It is not *about* something, it *is* that something. It does not begin and it does not end. A *yoik* does not need to have words – its narrative is in its power, it can tell a life story in song ... through words, melody, rhythm, expressions or gestures ... There is no way to experience the power of the *yoik* except to listen to it. Its natural character and the voices of the natural elements do not become apparent until the listener has thrown himself upon the winds”.¹⁴⁷ Berit Margrethe Oskal’s “ancient forces, ancient dreams, living thoughts, living hopes”.¹⁴⁸



¹⁴⁵ *Balkan Reunion*, Satélite K SATKCD164, released October 2015.

¹⁴⁶ *Nihan & The Singing Camels*, Whatabout Music WAM 107, produced by Dave Bianchi, released June 2019.

¹⁴⁷ *Folk World issue 9*, May 1999.

¹⁴⁸ “Eamifámut, eaminiegut Ealli jurdda, ealli doaivva”; *Fargga*, Mátki Records, released October 2011, music video directed by Niels Ovlla Dunfjell.

Nostalgia is a 68-minute connoisseur journey, familiar in its Nihan-esquery and minimalist compound but less to do with studio-generated electronics or microphone techniques than the acoustic surroundings and feedback of a 17th-century Catholic church in Wallonia (Église de Franc-Warêt, Namur), a region of Belgium steeped in Roman, Celtic, Germanic and Spanish echo.¹⁴⁹ Jordi Savall, *mentor in absentia*, is rarely far away. Friederike Heumann (viola da gamba, lirone), credited as joint executive producer, responsible for the concept and coordination of the project, studied with him (guesting subsequently with René Jacobs, Emmanuelle Haïm, William Christie and Ton Koopman). And Barcelona-born Xavier Díaz-Latorre



(theorbo, five-course baroque guitar), is a stalwart of his Hesperion XXI, La Capella Reial de Catalunya and Le Concert de Nations ensembles. Between them a formidable Basel pedigree. A fourth member of the team needs lauding. The American ethnomusicologist Katherine Meizel (Bowling Green State University, Ohio). She contributes a booklet essay of elegantly readable erudition (English, French, German, with song texts), at once scholarly yet atmospheric, her scene setting encouraging, inspiring, and guiding.

Addressing the album's title, she notes that "nostalgia" (from the Greek) comes from once being a medical term to encompassing "an extensive range of human emotional experience centred on loss, longing, and the past ... [we remember] the survival of those who came before us, and the endurance of their music. The sounds offered here represent in text and context the far-reaching scope of nostalgia: sorrow for the loss of home, the loss of loved ones, a loss of certainty in life, or of romantic love; and, most of all, the longing for their return". Of the subtitle, "The Sea of Memories", she says nothing. It's a powerful association of ideas nevertheless, to my mind drawing less on Charles Moran's *The Sea of Memories: The story of Mediterranean strife, past and present* (1942), Bush's *The Sea of Memories* come-back album (2012), or Fiona Valpy's recent *Sea of Memories* novel (2018), than on that genre of Mediterraneanised imagery, imagining and recall of which Orhan Pamuk's *The Museum of Innocence* (2008) manages to be both literary spawning and (housed in the Çukurcuma neighbourhood of Istanbul's Beyoğlu district) concrete manifestation: "the humanity of individuals".

The eighteen tracks add up to an exotic mosaic of ceramics, poems and sounds, their juxtaposition without chronology or continuity of place yet organic and seamless. Here there is no West or East nor South, just time passing, historical events, a babel of tongues and creeds, lost and found people voyaging lands from *Columnae Herculis* to Ararat. "In a way," observes Meizel, "all of these songs and compositions are at once farewells and welcome-homes to the world of the past ... Early-music performance in the twenty-first century underlines an often-forgotten reality of nostalgia: nostalgia is an *act* – not only of remembering, or even of recreating; rather, it is about composing our present with the sounds the past has left for us." Facets of the Mediterranean are missing: the islands, swathes of eastern North Africa, the Jews of Djerba. Notwithstanding, the interactive spread is challenging, a vibrant *communis musica*



¹⁴⁹ Various concert presentations of the album have been given around Western Europe since September 2017, including at the Halle *Handel Festival*, May 2018.

drawing on Armenian, French, Greek, Italian, Lebanese, Portuguese, Sephardic, Sufi and Turkish sources.

Preluding the voyage, hovering like a shaft of light through mist, an unaccompanied Greek folksong from Eastern Trakya, *Giati, pouli m' den kelaidis* – lamenting the fall of Christian Constantinople to the Muslim Ottomans in 1453, with the conversion of its greatest place of worship, Ayasofya, from cathedral to mosque. Beholding its ruin is a bird “so devastated ... that its voice is gone, and it cannot sing”. Nihan’s heartbreak handling says everything, her “Ah” early on shuddering from deep within, without melodrama or contrivance, throated and womanly. How she shapes her notes and ornaments, preparing her phrase endings with such clarity and culture, suggests something (less the *vibrato*) of Lousine Zakarian – whose *a capella* London recordings of Armenian sacred song I had the good fortune to produce in the late 1970s.¹⁵⁰

A fragile, consuming account of the romance *Nani nani*, a Sephardic lullaby from Smyrna (Izmir) with Iberian and Ottoman elements via Morocco - relating a father’s betrayal in the arms of his new love – errs towards the intimacy of Montserrat Figueras (watching over the cradle) more than the projection of Hadass Pal-Yarden (toiling the fields) with a *dolcissimo* quality exceeding both. A rapt, anguished yearning. Similarly Heumann’s earthily-droned gamba commentary. Expelled from Spain in 1492 (from Portugal four years later), the Jews of the region were dispersed throughout the Maghreb and western Ottoman Empire, the sultan of the day, Bayezid II, offering them refuge in Istanbul, Thessaloniki (Selanik), Smyrna and variously around the Balkans. Savall explored facets of their heritage in his 1999 *Diáspora Sefardí* recordings,¹⁵¹ a discographic landmark. Not found in his set is Nihan’s *Ya salió de la mar*, a wedding song from Selanik (“The graceful one came out of the sea/Wearing a dress of red and white”) sung by women attending as the bride emerges from ritual immersion – opened and closed by (improvised) gamba and guitar ‘symphonies’.

Other tracks display opulent, fluid flexibility, an idiomatic grasp of style. The timing and space, the microtonal slides, the matched guitar improvisation, of *Kızılıklar oldu mu*, a Turkish folksong from Keşan north of Gelibolu. The touch of stridency in the rhythmically hypnotic Sufi devotional hymn *Ah, nice bir uyursun* (with gamba), to words by the mystic 13th/14th-century poet Yunus Emre. Prefaced by a contemplative gamba improvisation, *Wa Habibi*, a familiar transmigratory Syriac/Maronite Passion lament from the perspective of Mary – of unclear authorship, whatever early sources might have been presumed “lost to fires, wars, and conquests”¹⁵² – is wondrous and probing, with a sign-off of the tenderest shaping. “Oh my love, my love what a sad state are you in? ... No loyalty is left in the world”. Transcendent musicality.

Three examples of Baroque aria (Cavalli – preceded by a “pull of the grave” Rossi passacaglia – Monteverdi, and Grandi) witness unforced mellowed purity, a paradisaical boy’s voice somewhere in the ether. In an anonymous mid-17th-century Italian setting – *Passacalli della vita*, life flying away in circles (“We have to die”) – the melody is floated and punctuated in the lightest of dialogue with an energised,

¹⁵⁰ *Armenian Sacred Songs*, Pearl SHE558, released 1980. At the time Zakarian (1937-92), trained in Yerevan, was celebrated as the solo soprano at Etchmiadzin Cathedral, centre of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

¹⁵¹ Alia Vox AV9809 A/B.

¹⁵² Nadine Mazloum, “On musical transmigration and the origins of ‘Wa Habibi’”, *Newsroom Nomad*, 16 April 2017.

elaborated gamba and guitar, Heumann extemporising glowingly. Melding Nihan's vocals with the mezzo range and operatic production of someone like Léa Desandre, equally vernal, would be an interesting venture.

Amor de mel, amor de fel (A love, sweet and bitter), is the one 20th-century song of the anthology, a *fado* by the late Portuguese musician and guitarist Carlos Gonçalves (1938-2020) made famous by Amália Rodrigues who wrote the lyrics and whom he accompanied often. Contrasting *fadistas* favouring emotionally 'fatalistic' lower register emphases, Nihan's version, a seductive lirone/guitar arrangement, focusses on the upper harmonics but without the harder, strident 'reediness' of singers like Rodrigues herself,¹⁵³ Katia Guerreiro,¹⁵⁴ or Mísia.¹⁵⁵ In some ways what she does evokes Mariza's more recent vocal modulation. Occasionally, from another tradition, the mid-range colouring and paced word dramatisation of the Romanian Maria Tănase either side of the Second World War. Nuances refracted through a glass of Turkish tea *alla* Pera Palas, Ibrahim Özgür's light tenor tango nostalgia, 1940s vintage, like that of the diction-perfect Şecaattin Tanyerli (Birsen Hanım also to a degree), distantly ghost the *portamenti* and dipped longer notes.

Several tracks are instrumental, predominantly gamba and theorbo duets. Kapsberger's lithe *Capona* (*Libro Quarto d'Intavolatura di Chitarrone*, 1640). Bartolomeo de Selma y Salaverde's virtuosic *Susanna Passeggiata* (Diminutions after Lasso, 1638), "encapsulating Venice's melting-pot character" (Meizel). An improvised *Tarantella* for guitar (after Sanz, 1674 and de Murcia, 1732). Komitas's *Sareri Hovin Mernem* for gamba, a folksong of love and separation symbolising Armenian identity and exile (collected in the early 1900s): "I'll Die for the Wind of the Mountains". Diego Ortiz's *Passamezzo Moderno* (1553). A grave French-style gamba *Chaconne* by Sieur de Sainte-Colombe, Marais's teacher (manuscript c.1690).

Such albums, judiciously produced and engineered (the long-experienced Hugues Deschaux), don't come by every day. A breath of fresh air, it provokes, engrosses and stimulates. With Heumann joining in, an unaccompanied *due discanti* folksong from Apulia in the heel of Italy – Mycenaean soil with subsequent Islamic and Ottoman ties where obscure Greek, Franco-Provençal and Albanian dialects are still to be found – draws the curtain. "My dearest, I beg you ... leave me not. Beautiful eyes, I beg you ... leave me not."



¹⁵³ *Lágrima*, 1983.

¹⁵⁴ *Fado Maior*, 2001.

¹⁵⁵ *Mediterraneo*, Christina Pluhar's 2013 concept album.



More than a minority: the case of the Rum Polites – Istanbul Rum in Turkey

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A glorious past, a threatened present

The Rum Polites¹⁵⁶ are members of a community of Greek-Orthodox Christians from Istanbul.¹⁵⁷ Ever since its origins as the ancient city-state of Byzantium, Istanbul has always housed a Greek-speaking population. When Constantine chose this location to build the New Rome, he also laid the foundation of the first Christian capital of the world, where the Greek Orthodox formed the leading majority for over a thousand years. During the Ottoman reign, many members of the Rum *millet* rose high in imperial ranks with the prestigious positions they held,¹⁵⁸ while they also constituted a large part of the economic and cultural elite with many powerful administrators and professionals of Rum origin.¹⁵⁹ The dominance of the Christian Orthodox in trade and commerce activities that peaked in late 19th century¹⁶⁰ continued well into the 1930s.¹⁶¹ The realm of arts and entertainment was largely dominated by the Rum Polites, who also contributed greatly to the scholarly and educational environment.¹⁶² With their even greater participation and visible presence in the early 20th century, the Rum Polites were the designers of “the modern façade of Istanbul society.”¹⁶³

¹⁵⁶ The community is also known variously as Greeks of Istanbul, Constantinopolitan Greeks, *Ομογένεια της Πόλης*, *Ρωμιοί Κωνσταντινουπολίτες (Πολήτες)* or *Istanbulu Rumlar*. Rum Polites (pronounced Room Poleetes) is a term that combines the two most commonly used terms of self-identification in both Greek and Turkish. See Ors, Ilay Romain. 2018. *Diaspora of the City: Stories of Cosmopolitanism from Istanbul and Athens*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

¹⁵⁷ See Örs, İlay Romain. "Beyond the Greek and Turkish dichotomy: The Rum Polites of Istanbul and Athens." *South European Society & Politics* 11.1 (2006): 79-94; Alexandris, Alexis. 1983. *The Greek Minority of Istanbul and Greek-Turkish Relations 1918-1974*. Athens: Center for Asia Minor Studies; Benlisoy, Foti, et al. (eds.) 2012. *İstanbul Rumları: bugün ve yarın*. Istanbul: İstos; Yücel, Hakan (ed.) 2018. *Rum Olmak, Rum Kalmak*. Istanbul: İstos.

¹⁵⁸ See Philliou, Christine. 2011. *Biography of an Empire: Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

¹⁵⁹ See Kamouzis, Dimitris. 2020. *Greeks in Turkey: Elite Nationalism and Minority Politics in Late Ottoman and Early Republican Istanbul*. London: Routledge.

¹⁶⁰ Anastasiadou, Méropi. 2009. "Greek Orthodox immigrants and modes of integration within the urban society of Istanbul (1850–1923)." *Mediterranean Historical Review* 24 (2): 151-167.

¹⁶¹ According to the 1935 Population Census, 49.6 per cent of the Christian population were identified as involved in trade or industry sectors, while the percentage of Muslim population was at the level of 25%. See Chatziioannou, Maria Christina, and Dimitris Kamouzis. 2013. "From a Multiethnic Empire to Two National States: The Economic Activities of the Greek Orthodox Population of Istanbul, ca. 1870–1939." In *Economies of Urban Diversity: Ruhr Area and Istanbul*. Reuschke, D., Salzbrunn, M., Schönhärl, K. (eds.) New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 117-143

¹⁶² See Bozi, Soula. 2012. *İstanbul Rumları*. Istanbul: Bilgi.

¹⁶³ See Ors, Ilay Romain. 2018. "Cosmopolitan Nostalgia: Geographies, Histories, and Memories of the Rum Polites." In *Istanbul: Living with Difference in a Global City*. Fischer Onar, N., Pearce, S., Keyman, F. (eds.), New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 81-96.

In the current phase of their long history, the Rum Polites are officially designated as the 'Rum minority' (*Rum azınlık*), a title they bear since the foundation of the Turkish nation-state in 1923. While the Turkish Republic is officially a secular state, where all citizens are deemed constitutionally equal regardless of their religious, ethnic, sectarian, language or other backgrounds, in practice the Sunni Muslim Turkish element remains socially and politically dominant.¹⁶⁴ This dominance exerts itself to the extent of rendering all 'others' as minorities who have been and still are marginalized in different ways. This process of marginalization – variously called 'minoritization' or 'Turkification'¹⁶⁵ – has been raging since the foundation of the Turkish state, despite international agreements regarding the protection of non-Muslim minority rights by the Treaty of Lausanne.¹⁶⁶

As inherited by the Turkish Republic from the Ottoman *millet* system, and as verified by the Treaty of Lausanne, the Rum Polites constitute a religiously defined community as followers of the Eastern Orthodox Church. With its Ecumenical center in Istanbul since its establishment in Byzantine Constantinople, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate is the first among equals (*primus inter pares*) in the Eastern Orthodox Church, leading a flock of over 200 million from all around the world. The current incumbent of this holy office is Bartholomew I, Archbishop of Constantinople/New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch. Beyond the central importance of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Istanbul today houses 36 Rum Orthodox churches, which are functioning as places of Christian worship. They are mainly serving the religious ritual needs of the Rum Polites, but also serve other believers, who visit the city as a site of prestige and pilgrimage. Identifying with this grand legacy puts religion at the center of spiritual as well as social life of the Rum Polites, but also posits Istanbul as a prime destination of world religious heritage.¹⁶⁷



Throughout the 20th century, the percentage of non-Muslims in the country has dropped from 20% to 0.1%, while the Rum Polites registered a drastic fall from 25% to 0.001% of the population.¹⁶⁸ About 1,5 million of that population loss took place in accordance with the Convention on the Forced Exchange of Populations agreed at the

¹⁶⁴ Yavuz, M. Hakan. "Understanding Turkish secularism in the 21st century: a contextual roadmap." *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 19.1 (2019): 55-78.

¹⁶⁵ See Aktar Ayhan. 2010. "Conversion of a 'Country' into a 'Fatherland': The Case of Turkification Examined, 1923–1934." In *Nationalism in the Troubled Triangle*. Sofos, S. and Ozkirimli, U. (eds.) London: Palgrave Macmillan. 21-35.

¹⁶⁶ See Ekmekcioglu, Lerna. 2014. "Republic of Paradox: the League of Nations minority protection regime and the new Turkey's step-citizens." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 46 (46) 657–679; Oran, Baskin. 2007. "The Minority Concept and Rights in Turkey: The Lausanne Peace Treaty and Current Issues." In *Human Rights in Turkey*. Z.F.Kabasakal (ed.) Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 35-56.

¹⁶⁷ See Türker, Nurdan. 2015. "Vatanım Yok Memleketim Var." *Istanbul Rumları: Mekan-Bellek-Ritüel*. Istanbul: İletişim.

¹⁶⁸ At the beginning of WWI, Christians made up 20% of the population. The number of Christians today is estimated to be less 0.1 %. For more on minorities in Turkish census records, see Dündar, Fuat. *Türkiye nüfus sayımlarında azınlıklar*. Istanbul: Doz, 1999.

Treaty of Lausanne.¹⁶⁹ A small rise in numbers was recorded upon the annexation of Antioch/Hatay to Turkey in 1938 as the city housed a resident Greek Orthodox community, who had escaped the Exchange by not living under Turkish jurisdiction at the time.¹⁷⁰ The following decades, however, saw several deliberate and unfortunate events that led to the dramatic fall of the Rum Polites population in Turkey. Some measures were directed at ending their leading position in Turkish economy; they were banned from working in a large spectrum of professions in 1926,¹⁷¹ and the discriminatory Wealth Tax was imposed with the threat of being sent to labor camps in 1942.¹⁷² Their social position was also targeted with the “Citizen, Speak Turkish!” campaign,¹⁷³ as well as the pogrom on 6-7th September 1955¹⁷⁴ and gang violence in 1974. Even more conclusive than these was the governmental decision that caused tens of thousands of the Rum Polites to be expelled in 1964.¹⁷⁵ At present, the Rum Polites community in Turkey today is around 2000 people in Istanbul and the islands of Imvros/Gökceada and Tenedos/Bozcaada in the Northern Aegean.¹⁷⁶ In this regard, the Rum Polites are described as a dwindling religious minority in danger of extinction in a country where processes of nation-state construction and related nationalist practices have contributed to the erasure of cultural diversity.¹⁷⁷

Viewing the Rum Polites simply as a disappearing minority community, however, is limiting because it downplays their significance within the urban society throughout their long history as well as at present. The Rum Polites have managed to revitalize themselves after each blow they received, and they continue to do so with their valuable contributions to the contemporary intellectual, scholarly, and cultural landscape of Istanbul. Despite the widely held presumptions about the insignificance or marginality of a dwindling minority, the Rum Polites have built on their glorious past to regain their vital importance in their city.¹⁷⁸ They offer an important case for us to acknowledge the discriminatory practices that they have suffered, so that we can attempt to resist and prevent the development of supremacist populist tendencies that the world is currently experiencing.

¹⁶⁹ See Hirschon, Renée, ed. 2003. *Crossing the Aegean: An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey*. Oxford: Berghahn.

¹⁷⁰ See Biner, Zerrin Özlem. 2011. “Multiple imaginations of the state: understanding a mobile conflict about justice and accountability from the perspective of Assyrian–Syriac communities.” *Citizenship Studies* 15 (3-4):367-379.

¹⁷¹ Okutan, Cagatay. *Tek Parti Doneminde Azınlık Politikaları*. Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi Universitesi Yayınları, 2004.

¹⁷² Aktar, Ayhan. 2000. *Varlık vergisi ve "Türkleştirme" politikaları*. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

¹⁷³ Aslan, Senem. “‘Citizen, Speak Turkish!’: A Nation in the Making”. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* (2007) 13:2, 245-272

¹⁷⁴ Güven, Dilek. 2018. *6-7 Eylül Olayları: Cumhuriyet Dönemi Azınlık Politikaları ve Stratejileri Bağlamında*. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

¹⁷⁵ Örs, İlay Romain. 2019. *İstanbul Rumları ve 1964 sürgünleri: Türk toplumunun homojenleşmesinde bir dönüm noktası*. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

¹⁷⁶ There is no agreement over the exact number of the community in Istanbul, but most accounts converge on the 2000-3000 mark, while some indicate even less. See Kalkan, Ersin. “Son 1244 Rum,” *Hürriyet Pazar*, 31 January 2005.

¹⁷⁷ Akgönül, Samim. 2007. *Türkiye Rumları: Ulus Devlet çağından Küreselleşme çağına bir azınlığın yok oluş süreci*. Istanbul: İletişim.

¹⁷⁸ See Tsokonas, Aris. “Η Πνευματική Αναγέννηση της Ομογένειας στην Κωνσταντινούπολη του 21ου Αιώνα,” and Ors, İlay Romain. “Μια καινούρια αναλαμπή: Η σημερινή γενιά Κωνσταντινουπολιτών.” *Proceedings in Ο Αγώνας της Ρωμιοσύνης για Επιβίωση: Παράδειγμα για την σημερινή Κινητοποίηση Αναδημιουργίας*. 6 September 2019.

An urban identity, a cosmopolitan community

Greek Orthodox Christians (Rum) from Istanbul are known by the name of their city: *İstanbullu* in Turkish, *Κωνσταντινουπολίτες* in Greek. The term *Polites* (*Πολίτες*) is both an abbreviation, but also a reference to being from the City (*η Πόλη*), which is the way Istanbul is designated in everyday Greek. By the same token, the term *polites* refers to the community of the city, citizens or urbanites. The Rum *Polites*, then, are a community defined by the city they originate from; they are the quintessential urban community because they are both *from* Istanbul and *of* Istanbul. Thus, the Rum *Polites* are not just another community living there; they are the very essence and being of the City of Istanbul.

The Rum *Polites* stand as a testimony to the rich history and cultural structure of Istanbul and show how particular urban communities may shape the identity of a city. Some world cities have a character that is dominant enough to withstand the passage of time and changes in their demographic and socioeconomic conditions. Istanbul is certainly such a city and the Rum *Polites* are but one of its many communities who contribute to the unique identity of the City. So the Rum *Polites* living in Greece or elsewhere in the diaspora maintain that Istanbulite identity by calling themselves *Polites* and displaying that distinction in their everyday life, social organization, artistic and intellectual production.¹⁷⁹ Though there have been certain vacillations in its intensity, there is no phase in the long history of Istanbul when the Rum *Polites* have not made significant contributions. They have left their mark in realms such as cinema,¹⁸⁰ literature,¹⁸¹ theater,¹⁸² music,¹⁸³ education,¹⁸⁴ sports,¹⁸⁵ architecture,¹⁸⁶ and culinary arts.¹⁸⁷ Studies of these artistic and intellectual realms need to take into account the contributions of the Rum *Polites* in order to have a more realistic and thorough picture of the richness of the cultural life of Istanbul.

Learning about the Rum *Polites* is also an exercise in embracing cosmopolitanism and understanding multiculturalism. Despite nationalist tendencies of generalizing and

¹⁷⁹ Ors, Ilay Romain. 2018. *Diaspora of the City: Stories of Cosmopolitanism from Istanbul and Athens*. New York: Palgrave.

¹⁸⁰ Bozis, Yorgo, and Sula Bozis. Paris' ten Pera'ya sinema ve Rum sinemaçılar. Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2014.

¹⁸¹ Eksertzoğlu, H. Osmanlı'da Cemiyetler ve Rum Cemaati-Dersaadet Rum Cemiyet-i Edebiyesi 1861-1912, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2004.

¹⁸² Chrysothemis Stamatopoulou-Vasilakou, "Greek Theatre in Southeastern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean from 1810 to 1961." *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 25, no. 2 (2007): 268–70.

¹⁸³ See Poulos, Panagiotis C. 2015. "Greeks and Turks Meet the Rum: Making Sense of the Sounds of 'Old Istanbul'." In *When Greeks and Turks Meet: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Relationship Since 1923*. Lytra, V. (ed.) Routledge; Erol, Merih. 2015. *Greek Orthodox Music in Ottoman Istanbul: Nation and Community in the Era of Reform*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

¹⁸⁴ See Dimitriadis, Irini. 1950'den Günümüze Eğitim Hayatımızda Rumlar. Bahcesehir, 2018.

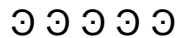
¹⁸⁵ Kokkinos, Georges. "La communauté grecque orthodoxe de l'Empire ottoman et la culture physique. Réactions et application graduelle." *Etudes Balkaniques* 1 (2004): 61-92.; Yildiz, Murat Cihan. Strengthening Male Bodies and Building Robust Communities: Physical Culture in the Late Ottoman Empire. Dissertation. University of California, Los Angeles, 2015.

¹⁸⁶ Ozil, Ayşe. 2013. "Greek Orthodox Communities and the Formation of an Urban Landscape in Late Ottoman Istanbul." *The Economies of Urban Diversity*. Reuschke, D., Salzbrunn, M., Schönhärl, K. (eds.) New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 145-163. See also *Batılılaşan İstanbul'un Rum Mimarları*. Kuruyazıcı, H., Şarlak, E. (ed.) Istanbul: Zoğrafyon Lisesi Mezunlar Derneği, 2011.

¹⁸⁷ Bozi, Soula. 1994. *Politiki Kouzina*. Athens: Ekdoseis Asterismos

homogenizing them, the Rum Polites form a community with many internal divisions and differentiations. They may have differences in their religious beliefs and practices, family types and origins, life experiences and memories, vocabularies and accents, political views and ideologies, occupational and economic statuses, educational and professional development, attitudes towards other gender and ethnic groups, among others – all of which attest to the diversity of the Rum Polites. This internalized diversity, however, underlines the fact that the Rum Polites make up a unique community that helps us understand the extent and limits of Istanbulite multiculturalism.¹⁸⁸ Recognizing cultural diversity is the first step in developing methodological cosmopolitanism as an epistemological and conceptual intervention against methodological nationalism,¹⁸⁹ and the Rum Polites offer a good case in point.

With their grand legacy that is both glorious and painful at the same time, the Rum Polites have survived to our day and are eternally here to stay with their cosmopolitan city identity that defines them and enriches the city. Understanding their past and present significance amidst nationalistic targeting of their very existence is an important first step in fully grasping the cultural politics of Turkey and the ways in which it shapes the urban society in different stages of history. For these and other reasons, the Rum Polites are more than simply a minority community.



REACTIONS TO OUR LAST REVIEW (NO 37)

- This issue is truly a masterpiece. Thank you for letting me be one of the first few to see it. I need some time to read the articles in detail but at first sight I can say that its coverage is amazing. A huge `bravo` to both of you.
- Many thanks - It looks like an excellent issue
- I zipped through but will read in detail, it looks amazing!
- Looks fantastic and I can't wait to read so many really interesting articles. Many congratulations on yet another excellent journal.
- And big congratulations on another triumph. No.37 looks very good – I do like the maps.



¹⁸⁸ See Ors, Ilay Romain. 2009. "İstanbulu Rumlar, Eski İstanbullar". In *Eski İstanbullular, Yeni İstanbullular*. M. Güvenç (ed.). Istanbul: Ottoman Bank Archives and Research Center, 115-123.
 Duru, Deniz N. 2015. "From Mosaic to Ebru: Conviviality in Multi-Ethnic, Multi-Faith Burgazadası, Istanbul." *South European Society and Politics* 20 (2): 243-263; Freitag, Ulrike. 2014. "Cosmopolitanism' and 'Conviviality'? Some conceptual considerations concerning the late Ottoman Empire." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 17 (4): 375-391; Eldem, Edhem. 2013. "Istanbul as a Cosmopolitan City." In *A Companion to Diaspora and Transnationalism*. Quayson, A., and G. Daswani (eds.) New York: John Wiley & Sons.

¹⁸⁹ Beck, Ulrich. "The cosmopolitan condition: Why methodological nationalism fails." *Theory, Culture & Society* 24.7-8 (2007): 286-290.

A Poem by Erhun Kula

Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul
residing in Belfast

MELIHA (DURING THE SIEGE OF SARAJEVO)

The spirit of Bosnia
rose in the Snipers Alley
in Sarajevo.

The Snipers Alley
shaded by the green hills
with its morbid tapestry
woven by the bullets
dyed by the blood
of the innocent
from where
sharp shooters of the darkness
target practiced
on women
children
particularly the old folk
who could not walk
fast enough.

The Snipers Alley
ultimately
became a testimony
to western indifference
to a native people
who happened to be Moslem
and worse
of Ottoman stock
in the heart of Europe.

But it is there
in the Snipers Alley
human endurance
heroic resistance
and above all
female defiance
took hold.

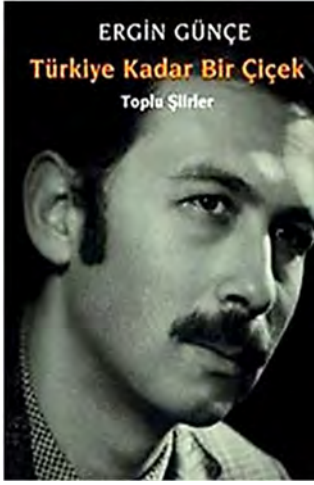


Meliha
a handsome woman
of Bosnia
never wore the veil
to cover her dark
brown hair
and never will
a sign of submission
to fundamentalism

Instead
she put on her best
clothes

during the brutal siege
lasting three years
strolled the streets of Dobrinja
in defiance
of the dark forces
lurking on the hills
telling the world
“they can kill me
but will never defeat
my Ottoman spirit”.

Meliha
in her meticulous make up
but often weary
signalled the coming victory
of the human race
over the darkest forces
never left
the European shores.



Ergin Günçe
1938-1983

He studied Economics at the London School of Economics and taught at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara. In addition to his academic career, he became well-known for his poetry and also for his political writings. He is survived by his son, Adal, a medical doctor, who granted all copyrights to the translator of the poem below,.



Kıvrıntı

Kulak zarlarına vurur
Otobüs yollarında acı kıvrıntı
Yazık ki gürültüler kör
Gürültüler sağır
Gürültüler garip

Bir nefes tıklır içinize
Bir düşünce tıklır dallı budaklı

Sihir kutuları kainatın doruğunda

Göremeyiz ölümlerin tazeliğini
Bir tuhaf burukluktur
İçlerinde saklı
Yolların kavşak noktasında
düşünürüz

Yollar bizi biz yolları

Ergin Günçe
(01/01/1955)

Folding in

A bitter fold hits
The membrane of the ear on bus routes
Pity that noises are blind
Noises are deaf
Noises are strange

A breath is crammed into your lungs
A thought is crammed branched &
gnarled

Boxes of magic are at the peak of the
universe

We cannot see the freshness of deaths
It is an unfamiliar twist
Hiding inside
We think of routes at the point of
crossroads

Routes think of us, we think of routes

Translated by Gülay Yurdal-Michaels
(12/03/2021)

Conference

John Moreton & Brian Beeley



BRISMES

British Society for Middle Eastern Studies

BRISMES 2021

We reported in Issue 34 of Autumn 2019 on the proceedings of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES) annual conference held at the University of Leeds in June of that year. The underlying conference theme then was the need for an interdisciplinary approach and spirit. Since then, however, not only has the pandemic forced the postponement of last year's planned conference, but BRISMES has also 'moved on' following the vote at the 2019 AGM to become an academic organisation particularly concerned with aspects of '(de)colonization' and with advocacy on various issues. These initiatives will come within a separate company distinct from BRISMES itself which will retain its long-standing status as a charity.

Much credit must certainly be given to the co-hosts (BRISMES and the University of Kent, the would-be 2020 hosts) of this huge online conference which took place over the full five days, 5-9 July, rather than the usual three days. A special conference platform had been created, based on Zoom Meetings, to allow for something approaching eighty parallel panels to be offered, in addition to three 'keynote' lectures and various special sessions, roundtables, etc. Many of the usual publishers were also in evidence, and BATAS members may like to know that Edinburgh University Press has launched its new academic book series *Edinburgh Studies on Modern Turkey* which aims to examine 'the domestic and international issues of the Turkish Republic from the 1920s until the present time'.

Nowadays we live in very serious and ascetic times, and to appreciate terminological reality we need to absorb the forbidding newspeak of the social and political sciences. This means recognizing not only the more familiar houseplants such as *hegemonic masculinities* but also tackling – if necessary with a machete – the clinging undergrowth of *multiple horizontalities*, *historical imbrications* and *radical futurities*, etc.

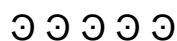
Planning attendance at selected panels over the five days without the usual printed programme was a challenge, but the organizers helpfully sent out emails at the start of each day setting out a reminder of that day's programme. Many of us are now well initiated into the Zoom age of 'remote' academic engagement and the platform worked well, with just occasional screen-sharing delays and no unwanted alien interventions. The whole event was evidently intended to compensate for the lack of a conference last year and to enable as many younger scholars as possible to contribute their research findings in the new format. This continued the trend, noted previously, towards featuring more and more scholars originally from Turkey, the Arab world and elsewhere working at academic institutions in the UK and North America and fewer native British participants. Indeed, the latter constituted a small minority of the 300-plus speakers which is the reverse of the position at the first BRISMES Conference

held about a half-century ago. It was also clear this time that Zoom makes it easy to 'attend' – eliminating the problem of 'no-shows' unable to travel to a meeting place.

Turkish topics, as usual nowadays, were presented on many conference days by scholars within Turkey (including Bilkent University) as well as by those outside the country. Typically, there was a scholarly interest in the late Ottoman era, shown especially in a study of historical writing in the later 19th century, through the age of reform and into the Hamidian period, with history-writing being developed then as a useful tool in the promotion of identity and the state ideology of Ottomanism. Another talk traced the emergence of historical professionalism in the late Ottoman and early republican periods: the rise of professional bodies for historians accelerated the nationalizing of history and played an important transitional role between the imperial and nation-state attitudes to writing history. Aspects of republican Turkish history, culture and society (even some quite recent ones) were also covered in several interesting presentations. One of these examined those hegemonic masculinities seen in the popular TV series *Magnificent Century* and *Diriliş (Resurrection): Ertuğrul*, which appeared to promote within Turkish popular culture the attractions and benefits of political authoritarianism. Another analysed the political commitment of the Sufi orders in contemporary Turkey and the reasons for their support for the AKP. A particularly fascinating panel was one postponed to the final day and focusing on the idea of rethinking Turkish national history through oral history research and memory studies, using this as a critical tool able "to effectively decolonize social science research which has long been state-focused" (with a reliance on access to archives). The talks included primary research on such contested matters as the 1930 Menemen incident, the lives and treatment of Armenian citizens during the early republican era and the memories of the Turkish Jewish community in Seattle, thus "reclaiming the voices of those groups who have been left out of the mainstream narratives".

Cyprus also had a look-in, with a Greek Cypriot at the University of Kent and a Turkish researcher from METU presenting their surveys of attitudes amongst Cypriots both on the island and in the diaspora towards the complex realities surrounding a possible eventual settlement in Cyprus.

Next year's conference is set to be held in more traditional mode (though no doubt with a virtual element also, for the benefit of many participants) in the bracing environment of St Andrews University. It will seek "to amplify and deepen the conversation on (de)coloniality within Middle Eastern studies". Well, nothing's better than a bracing conversation by the seaside, and so we look forward to that.

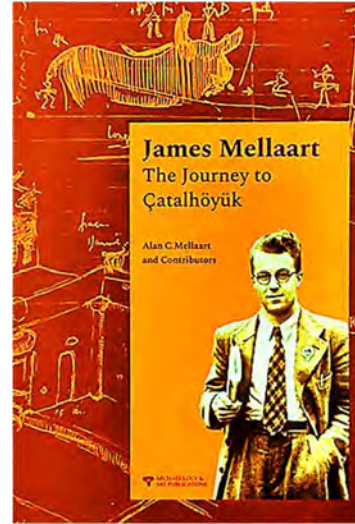


James Mellaart:

THE JOURNEY TO ÇATALHÖYÜK

Alan C Mellaart & Contributors

Istanbul, Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayınları, 2020.
ISBN 978-605-396-523-7.
www.zerobooksonline.com.



The archaeologist James Mellaart was an outstanding figure in the uncovering of the pre-history of Anatolia, as well as the most controversial. Born in London in 1925 to Dutch parents with Scottish origins, his family moved back to the Netherlands in 1931, staying there throughout the Second World War. To avoid conscription by the Germans, James went underground in 1944, working as a technical assistant in the Museum of Antiquities in Leiden and starting a study of Egyptology. By 1947, when he joined University College, London, to read Egyptology and Near Eastern History, he had already acquired a prodigious knowledge of classical and ancient near eastern languages. With graduation in 1951, having decided he wanted to become an archaeologist, he was awarded a scholarship by the newly-founded British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara (BIAA, now the British Institute at Ankara). He carried out surface surveys in several regions of Anatolia, identifying a multitude of important prehistoric sites. These included the ground-breaking chalcolithic-to-bronze age settlement of Beycesultan, in Denizli province, which he excavated with the then Director of the BIAA, Seton Lloyd, in 1954-57. James and his wife Arlette were married in 1954. In 1957 he started work on the neolithic site at Hacilar, near Burdur, to be followed in 1961 by that at Çatal Hüyük (now re-spelt Çatalhöyük), his greatest discovery, in the Konya plain. This ended in 1965, after the Turkish authorities withdrew permission, ending his career in the field. Mellaart returned to London as Lecturer in Anatolian Archaeology and the Prehistory of the Near East at the Institute of Archaeology, University College, where he remained until his retirement in 1991. He died in 2012.

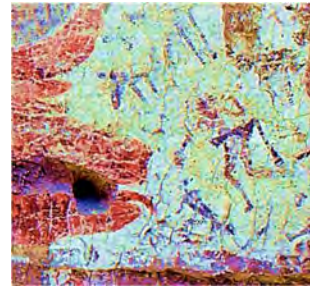


In recounting almost every aspect of James Mellaart's life, his son Alan has brought together a remarkable collection of chapters by no less than 18 authors, both extracted from previous publications and specially written for this book. It has something in it for almost everyone – anyone who is interested in the history and society of late Ottoman and republican Istanbul, as well as the archaeological specialists. It is lavishly

illustrated, with helpful maps as well as plentiful reproductions of Mellaart's field notebooks.

The book can be divided into two sections. In the first, Alan Mellaart tells us of his own childhood experiences at Çatalhöyük, followed by an account of his father's early life, with its harrowing experiences in wartime Holland. James Mellaart's career between 1951 and 1965 is told in his own words, with the remainder of his career recounted by Alan, with plenty of fascinating illustrations. Arlette also plays a major part in the story, which Alan relates. Born in Istanbul in 1924 of Romanian and Istanbul Jewish parentage, her mother Ulviye, having left Arlette's father, joined her grandfather, the lawyer Adolf Rosenthal, in Monaco in 1933. Accordingly, as Arlette relates, her childhood passed in the exotic and glamorous atmosphere of pre-war Monte Carlo. In 1939 Ulviye married Kadri Cenani, the scion of an historic Ottoman family, and the couple took Arlette back to Istanbul. Here they lived in the magnificent but somewhat ramshackle mansion built by Kadri Bey's great grandfather, the Ottoman statesman Mehmet Esad Safvet Pasha, in the Bosphorus suburb of Kanlıca. Their life in 'Bohemia on the Bosphorus' is also engagingly described by Arlette, with many of her mother's watercolours, in an article originally published in 2002. Tragically, the *yalı* burnt to the ground in 1976.¹⁹⁰ This is followed by two chapters on Safvet Pasha and Kadri Cenani's other distinguished ancestors, which give us fascinating sidelights on late Ottoman history.

The main part of the book deals with James Mellaart's career and achievements as an archaeologist between 1951 and 1965, related by his professional colleagues. As an interested amateur, I am quite unable to offer any informed opinion, but it seems to be generally recognised by all who can that James Mellaart revolutionised our understanding of the history of Anatolia between the eighth and third millennia BC. This period was crucial, since it marked mankind's transition from a hunter-gatherer existence to that of a farmer, planting crops and herding animals, besides developing pottery, advanced tools and permanent settlements. As Mehmet Özdoğan explains, scholars such as Seton Lloyd had previously believed that there was no sign of neolithic settlement in Anatolia, and that



the 'Neolithic Revolution' had happened south of the Taurus, in Syria and Mesopotamia. At Hacilar, and even more spectacularly at Çatalhöyük, James Mellaart discovered urban settlements (of up to 8,000 people in the latter case) with all the signs of a settled agricultural economy and striking artistic development. In short, Anatolia was the centre of one of the most crucial changes in human history.

Over all this there hangs a lasting mystery. The Dorak story has been told many times, but can be briefly summarised. In November 1958 Mellaart called on Seton Lloyd and David Stronach, both at the British Institute at Ankara (BIAA), and claimed that 'some years before' (he later altered the date to 1958) he had visited the family home in İzmir

¹⁹⁰ Arlette Mellaart, 'Reflections on a Lost Summerhouse', *Cornucopia*, Vol.5, Issue 25 (2002) pp.62-71.

of an attractive young Greek woman called Anna Papastrati whom he had met on a train. Here he was shown a large collection of richly decorated grave goods from the early bronze age, comparable to those found by Schliemann in Troy. These had allegedly been found in Dorak, in Bursa province, by a Greek archaeological team during the Greek occupation of the region during 1919-22. Mellaart made drawings of the alleged objects, which were then worked up as coloured line drawings and published in the *Illustrated London News* in 1959. He was wrongly suspected of acting for a smuggling ring, and his excavation permit was withdrawn in 1965, ending his archaeological career in Turkey. Since then, none of the alleged objects, of which there are no photographs, have appeared in the black market or elsewhere. Called to investigate, the İzmir police could find no trace of an 'Anna Papastrati', or a house at the address given by Mellaart. Two letters which Mellaart claimed were from the mysterious Anna were apparently typed by himself. The conclusion is that 'Anna Papastrati' and the 'Dorak treasure' never existed, and that the whole tale was almost certainly James Mellaart's invention.

Nor was this the end of the story. Although it is only fleetingly referred to in this collection (pp.88, 215, 466) in 1989 Mellaart co-authored a four-volume book, *The Goddess from Anatolia*, containing a large number of what were claimed to be 'sketched reconstructions' of large and sophisticated wall paintings allegedly from Çatalhöyük, uncovered during his excavations, but inexplicably not published at the time. He claimed that the paintings were copies of neolithic *kilims* (woven carpets) and the basis of an Anatolian mother-goddess cult. As in the Dorak case, he produced no photographs, physical evidence of the paintings, or a believable explanation of why he had not published them earlier. None of his field staff confirmed having seen them at the time. The conclusion is that the story was just another James Mellaart fantasy.¹⁹¹

This may clear up one question, but it leaves another unanswered – why? Why would an eminent archaeologist risk severe damage to his career by inventing 'finds' which could never be proven? In the case of the alleged Dorak treasure, David Stronach tells us that at the end of the excavating season at Beycesultan in 1958, Seton Lloyd complained to Mellaart about the paucity of finds at the site. He suggests that Mellaart may have fabricated the Dorak story as a way of showing, contrary to Lloyd's suggestion, that western Anatolia was the scene of a flourishing civilisation in the early bronze age (p.441). However, this does not explain the 'Goddess from Anatolia' invention. When I asked him about this, Alan Mellaart said simply that his father loved practical jokes, and this seems the most likely explanation. As a result, a renowned archaeologist became still more famous, but for all the wrong reasons, with a life full of outstanding achievement, besides perplexing enigma.

William Hale
Emeritus Professor, SOAS, London



¹⁹¹ Marla Mallett, 'The Goddess from Anatolia: An Updated View of the Çatal Hüyük Controversy' (www.marlamallett.com/chupdate.htm).



A COUP IN TURKEY:

A TALE OF DEMOCRACY, DESPOTISM AND
VENGEANCE IN A DIVIDED LAND

by **Jeremy Seal**

2021, London: Chatto & Windus
ISBN: 9781784741754

This meticulously researched book views the country and its people before and after the pivotal 1960 coup d'état with a critical as well as sympathetic eye. Seal's Turkey is not only divided East-West but is also a space where rightists and leftists, liberals and authoritarians, secularists and Islamists, the charitable and the cruel, traditionalists and modernists and many more with opposing worldviews exist side by side. In other words, the book explores all the colours and shades of the country, in a versatile writing style with the objectivity of an outsider and the sensitivity of an insider.

Jeremy Seal first went to Turkey in 1984 to teach English in Ankara. Fascinated with the country and its people, he went on to publish several books and articles¹⁹². *A Coup in Turkey*, his first book on a political subject, combines unemotional research with the romanticism of an admiring traveller:

'We passed a lake, its islands topped with ruined monasteries, and squeezed between vast boulders, whose eroded undersides were variously painted with prehistoric stick figures in faded ochres or with medieval Christian frescoes. Below the shattered ceremonial steps at Labraunda, the sacred sanctuary where ancient Carians once dined in honour of Zeus, the path descended through pastures, and woods daubed pink with cyclamens and sands of verbena.' (p. 18).

The book cover shows current President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, recognizable even though half his face is concealed, but the bust of a man in dark glasses is less readily identifiable. He is the legendary Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, who survived a horrific plane crash in 1959 near Gatwick Airport in West Sussex, England, and was rescued by a British farming couple, only to be executed two years later by his compatriots. Seal takes us from Menderes to Erdoğan in fourteen chapters each with a significant date as its heading. Thus the book starts with Turkey moving from one-party rule to democracy with the establishment of a second contender, the Democrat Party, in 1946. Although this party, founded by Celal Bayar, Atatürk's friend and finance minister, won only 64 seats out of 465 in the 1946 election, its charismatic spokesperson Adnan Menderes' success in rallies and the party's slogan *Yeter! Söz Milletin!* (Enough! Let the people's voice be heard!) worked wonders in 1950, bringing it to power then with 53.3 percent of the vote. It did even better in 1954 with 58.4 percent but held on with only 48.6 percent in 1957. This disappointing result drove the party to take anti-democratic measures, discontent over which grew and culminated in the coup d'état on 27 May 1960. Members of the cabinet, parliamentarians and

¹⁹² Jeremy Seal contributed 'Turkey Tourism' to *TAS Review*, 31, Spring 2018, pp.27-29

other Democrat supporters were taken to Yassıada¹⁹³, an island in the Sea of Marmara¹⁹⁴, to be tried. The trial period ended in 1961 with the execution of Adnan Menderes (Prime Minister), Fatin Rüştü Zorlu (Minister of Foreign Affairs) and Hasan Polatkan (Minister of Labour and Finance).

Prologue – 17 February 1959: The book starts with PM Menderes' plane crash. His rescuers, Antony and Margaret Bailey, are introduced with reference to the presents showered on them by grateful Turks. The prologue describes at length Menderes' return on 28 February to Ankara where he was welcomed with 'displays of ritual butchery' (p. 9) by thousands grateful to God for saving their hero – though fourteen attendants died in the same plane crash. The irony here is that the 'Menderes Miracle' (as defined by the *Daily Mirror*) was followed by the 'Menderes debacle', his hanging two years later by his countrymen.

Chapter 1 – 14 May 1950: This chapter starts at the point in the 1990s when Seal was introduced to Adnan Menderes through a photograph kept by an admirer and moves on to a visit to Margaret Bailey to discover the details of their visit to Turkey in 1960 as guests of the prime minister. The reader is then taken on a tram in 2016 from Zeytinburnu to Sirkeci railway station, with views of modern constructions amidst Ottoman remnants, a change the author uses to point to 'mass imprisonments, judicial abuses, media clampdowns, suicide bombings, and brutal army operations'. (p. 21) The chapter concludes with a fine observation of the social transformation between the pre- and post-1950s. Seal notes that the Republican People's Party had enlightened Anatolia's agricultural population with Village Institutes whereas Democrat Party policies for improving rural living conditions involved material goods (tractors, steel ploughs, etc.).

Chapter 2 – 6 October 1926: After comment on Ottoman society and sultans, Seal moves on to the Ottoman colonel who became the founder of a new state. We then flash forward to 2016 when he visits the first statue of Atatürk and observes its sad fate. Cast by an Austrian sculptor, Heinrich Krippel, and unveiled in Sarayburnu, Istanbul in 1926 it is described in a heart-breaking way¹⁹⁵:

'It stood among skewed marble slabs in a weed-strewn precinct which stray dogs favoured as their toilet. The brass plaques had been ripped away, either as souvenirs or for their scrap value, and the air was thick with fumes from the highway which ran discourteously close'. (p. 48)

Chapter 3 – 22 November 1952: This chapter refers to the re-adoption of Arabic in the calls to prayer, Adnan Menderes' wealthy background and westernized education, the plight of the poet Nazım Hikmet, and a deadly attack in Malatya on Ahmet Emin Yalman, a well-known columnist who was disillusioned by the new regime's tolerance of religious extremism. However, there are connections between these different elements. While a friend of Seal claims that there is no difference between Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Adnan Menderes, Seal's delicate structuring of this chapter tells us otherwise. One notices that Menderes, despite his privileged background, reached out to the poor, in contrast to the present head of state who comes from a modest background but has created his own bourgeoisie. Another difference lies in their

¹⁹³ Dilligil, Turhan (forthcoming). *Yassıada'da Bir Gazeteci: Gözaltında 170 Gün (A Journalist on Yassıada: 170 Days in Captivity)*. (re-arranged by Arın (Dilligil) Bayraktaroğlu). Ankara: Arkadaş Yayınevi.

¹⁹⁴ In a postscript Seal notes that a Yassıada museum was inaugurated on 27 May 2020.

¹⁹⁵ The statue was restored in 2020 by the Istanbul Municipality led by Ekrem İmamoğlu.

attitude to religion. Erdoğan promotes Islamism for the sake of Islamism, while Menderes promoted religious freedom for the sake of capitalism.

The attention to detail throughout the book, not least in this chapter, is praiseworthy, although there are some minor misrepresentations or omissions. For instance, Menderes' school, referred to as 'Izmir's prestigious American college' (p. 56), was in fact Kızılcıllu American College, founded by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and closed during Atatürk's time.¹⁹⁶ As for education, Menderes, a graduate of Ankara University's Law School was the antithesis of Erdoğan. There is also a small omission in the representation of Berin Hanım, Menderes' wife. The author mentions that Dr Nazım Bey, who was executed in 1926 for plotting to assassinate Mustafa Kemal, was Berin Hanım's cousin but a more important family connection was that Berin was also the cousin of Emel whose husband, Fatin Rüştü Zorlu (Minister of Foreign Affairs), was executed alongside Menderes in 1961.

Chapter 4 – 29 May 1953: Chapter 4 compares the emphasis on national and religious dates in the administrations of Menderes' Democrat Party and Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party. The Menderes governments commemorated the two conquests of Istanbul equally spectacularly. Mehmet II's entry into the city in 1453 was celebrated in 1954 while similar festivities marked Mustafa Kemal taking back the city from the Allies in 1920. In contrast, Erdoğan has turned a blind eye to significant dates associated with Atatürk while commemorating the fall of Istanbul to the Ottomans. Menderes thus maintained a balancing act, 'appealing to those who would hear the Arabic *ezan* without unduly alienating those who would rather cheer for Miss Turkey'. (p. 89)

Chapter 5 – 6 September 1955: Perhaps surprisingly, the 1955 opening of the first 5-star Hilton Hotel in Istanbul takes us to the two significant insurrections in the history of the new Republic. First were the riots of 6–7 September 1955 against the Greek minority in Istanbul in response to a bomb exploding near Atatürk's birthplace in Salonica and coinciding with the Tripartite Conference on Cyprus in London. British writer Ian Fleming, who was staying at the hotel during the riots, later reported on the wreckage. Second were the Gezi Park protests on 15 June 2013 against government plans to develop this green area near Taksim to rebuild the artillery barracks of Ottoman times. We read that police:



'stormed the park ... scattering the protesters who fled for the safety of nearby hotels whose staff were known to be sympathetic. Among these was the Hilton where several witnesses were to capture the ensuing scenes on their phones' (p. 106).

While the police did burst into the Hilton to capture chemical solutions and gas masks – the munitions of the protesters – the fugitives actually took refuge in the Divan Hotel, adjacent to Taksim Square.¹⁹⁷

Chapter 6 – 21 September 1956: This chapter focuses on Turkish-style crime and punishment. Seal structures it around the date in the chapter title, when a surreal arrest was made of a newspaper boy for shouting the headline "Finance Minister Resigns".

¹⁹⁶ This reopened in 1937 as *Kızılcıllu Köy Enstitüsü* (Kızılcıllu Village Institute) and closed once again in 1950, to be assigned to NATO subsequently.

¹⁹⁷ Claudia Roth of the German Green Party was among those badly affected by the police's excessive use of tear gas inside the Divan hotel.

Under 1954 legislation that prohibited 'publishing news deemed false or liable to impair the political or financial integrity of the state' (p. 118), this was a crime. Laughable anecdotes such as this notwithstanding, gruesome facts are introduced about methods of execution over the years, including hanging, 'long drop', beheading and stoning to death. There is also a lengthy section on the Ulucanlar Prison Museum where the walls are covered with pictures of past prisoners, including household names such as Nazım Hikmet, Yılmaz Güney, and Deniz Gezmiş.

Chapter 7 – 27 October 1957: In this chapter Menderes announces the foundations of an enormous attraction, the Kocatepe Mosque, in the capital – which until then had nothing to compete with the splendour of the Ottoman mosques in Istanbul, and an economy in tatters. It then jumps to 2016 when Can Dündar escaped the bullets of a gunman outside the courthouse where he was tried for revealing state secrets and publishing photos that showed government-owned vehicles carrying weapons to Syrian *jihadi* groups.

Chapter 8 – 14 July 1958: Here are set out the elements to prepare the reader for the 1960 coup, though skill is needed to decipher the underlying connections. It begins with the first assembly of the Republic where disputes and even brawls between the parties were stepped up, especially after 1957, and suggests a similarity between Erdoğan's new 'largest in the world' Ankara Railway Station and Menderes' devotion to modernising Istanbul. The two politicians are also compared for their actions driven by the fear of losing power.

Chapter 9 – 28 April 1960: The chapter starts with 3 April 1960, when İnönü's train was made to wait for three hours near Kayseri by protesters. It then refers to Menderes allowing Said Nursi to speak to crowds in several cities, angering the secularists. A comment follows on Nazım Hikmet in Moscow writing poems against Menderes' allowing Turkish troops to join the Korean war. On 28 April the Investigative Commission's move to close down the main opposition party is endorsed by the parliament. Student demonstrations then start in Istanbul on 2 May and the protest march by Military Academy cadets follows on 21 May.

Chapter 10 – 27 May 1960: Seal describes how the military took control in the early hours of 27 May, how Celal Bayar (the President) and Adnan Menderes were arrested, how order was established, and how people celebrated the revolution. Seal mentions that five people who died during the pre-coup protests – the 'Martyrs of Independence' – were buried in a special section of Atatürk's mausoleum, although a later report stated that they were shot accidentally or as they fell off a parading tank.¹⁹⁸



Chapter 11 – 14 October 1960: Seal describes the dilapidation of islands in the Sea of Marmara, notably Yassıada where the Democrats were kept. There are some informational gems, for example Henry Bulwer, a British ambassador in Constantinople, having a residence built on the island in the 1850s. We also learn about his novelist brother, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, famous for his opening line 'It was a dark and stormy night' and the slogan 'The pen is mightier than sword'. A section

¹⁹⁸ Information about the names of these five and how they died is available at: <https://www.dunyabulteni.net/tarihten-olaylar/27-mayis-hareketinin-hurriyet-sehitleri-h161228.html>

about Mehmet Taşdelen, one of Menderes' guards, reveals that it was he who took some of the photos of the prime minister in his solitary confinement. We learn of the warm relationship between this guard and the captive but are spared details of the horrible treatment the fallen prime minister received from some other guards, driving him to a failed suicide attempt.

Chapter 12 – 15 September 1961: The first of the Yassıada trials from 14 October 1960 to 15 September 1961 concerned the financial gain alleged to have been made from the Afghan dog presented to President Bayar in Kabul. Seal then details his inconclusive search for the grave of Menderes' illegitimate baby, for whose death the prime minister was tried. Then comes the description of the ship carrying the parties to the Yassıada trials, Menderes' gradually worsening health and rumours of his physical torture. This is the best chapter in the book, all elements being linked in to create a sad picture that is hard to forget.

Chapter 13 – 17 September 1961: While Menderes was recovering from his suicide attempt, Zorlu and Polatkan were taken to İmralı to be hanged. Despite requests for clemency from world leaders, including the UK Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, the National Unity Committee decided to execute Menderes as soon as he was healthy enough. The execution took place on 17 September 1961. A photo of Margaret Bailey praying in Jordan's Wood, where her important guest had emerged from a crashed plane two years earlier, adds to the poignant description of Menderes' last hours.

Chapter 14 – 15 October 1961: Amidst the worldwide shock at the executions of three Democrats, a Greek newspaper is said to have reported a 'tragic and barbarous end'. (p. 277) The description of Menderes walking to his death is extremely moving. Soon after the trials, a general election on 15 October 1961 saw a newly founded Justice Party, full of the deposed prime minister's sympathisers, come to power with 60 percent of the vote...

Arın Bayraktaroğlu

Lucy Cavendish College,
University of Cambridge



**Books
Written,
Compiled, or
Sponsored
by
Oğuz Aydemir**



Oğuz Aydemir is a Turkish philanthropist, underwater archaeologist, and entrepreneur. He has been involved in archaeological surveys and excavations in and around Çeşme. In his philanthropic work, he has supported and sponsored several major exhibitions, including many with a focus on naval history, and has helped promote a number of concerts. He has also donated books to several schools in Turkey.

The following is a selection of books collected by Aydemir and listed here by Arın Bayraktaroğlu.

1. Björn Jónsson of Skardsá, **The Turkish Raid Saga**, Türkiye Sualtı Arkeolojisi Vakfı, online book
http://www.tinaturk.org/THE_TURKISH_RAID_SAGA.pdf
This book was written in 1643 and its online Turkish version is published under the auspices of Oğuz Aydemir. It is the story of a slave who recounted events related to the Turkish raid by Murad Reis on Iceland in the 17th century.
2. Erdem Yücel, **Kartacalı Hannibal (Hannibal of Carthage)**, Bericap Yayınları, 1992
This book is about the place where Hannibal died and was buried. It has been the subject of long research and among historians.
3. **Osman Hamdi Bey**, (a booklet published privately in 1995)
All the paintings of Osman Hamdi Bey, an artist, an archaeologist and a museologist who lived in Eskihisar, were reproduced together with a brief historical information.
4. **A Cultural Atlas of the Turkish World:**
Volume 1: The Pre-Islamic Period, Volumes 2 & 3: The : Selçuk Empire
Volumes 4, 5, 6 & 7: Ottoman Empire, Turkish Cultural Foundation (Türk Kültür Vakfı), 1997, ISBN-975-7522-12-0; Part-sponsorship was provided by Oğuz Aydemir.
5. Aynur Özet, **Sparkles from the Deep: Glass Vessels of the Bodrum Museum of Underwater Archaeology**, BERICAP, 2000, ISBN 975-93771-0-1
Publication of this book was sponsored by Oğuz Aydemir.
6. Oğuz Aydemir, **Gravür, Harita ve Fotoğraflarla Çeşme**
(*Çeşme Through Engravings, Maps and Photographs*)
Published privately, 2002, OCLC: 1119556604
7. Oğuz Aydemir, **John Paul Jones: The Father of American Navy against Algerian Gazi Hasan Paşa: First encounters between the United States and the Muslim world**
Istanbul: Türkiye Sualtı Arkeolojisi Vakfı, 2006
This booklet combines information from various sources on the relations between Ottomans, Russians and Confederation of Americans during the 18th century, and focuses on John Paul Jones who actually was a Scottish captain from England, but later became the first admiral of the Confederation in America.
8. Ali Rıza İşıpek, Oğuz Aydemir, **1770 Çeşme Deniz Savaşı, 1768-1774 Osmanlı-Rus Savaşları**
(*Battle of Çeşme 1770, 1768-1774 Ottoman-Russian Wars*)
Istanbul: Denizler Kitabevi, 2010, ISBN 978-9944-264-27-3
First published in Turkish and English on 7 July, 2006, this was a complementary catalogue to the exhibition where Oğuz Aydemir was also the curator.
9. Antoine Ignace Melling, **A picturesque voyage to Constantinople and the shores of the Bosphorus, (Voyage Pittoresque de Constantinople et des Rives du Bosphore) - İstanbul ve Boğaz kıyılarına pitoresk seyahat**
Istanbul : Denizler Kitapevi, 2012, ISBN 978-9944-264-39-6
A pivotal example of the 19th century travel literature. Rich in detail, the accompanying text serves as a descriptive narrative to the engravings.
10. **The Great Osijek Bridge (Veliki Osječki Most)**
Produced privately: Zagreb and Osijek, 2014
The result of a collaboration with the Institute of the History of Art in Zagreb and Osijek, this book is about the Great Osijek Bridge, built in the 16th century by Mimar Sinan in six weeks.



11. Anđelko Vlašić, Oğuz Aydemir, ***Traces of Ottoman Culture in Croatia*** (*Tragovi Osmanske kulture u Hrvatskoj*)
Zagreb: Published privately, 2015, ISBN 978-9944-264-71-6
This book is the end of a series of activities which contribute to the enrichment and strengthening of the cultural, scientific and everyday links between Croatia and Turkey. The book summarizes information about the ethnographic elements of Ottoman origin found in architecture, folklore and customs in Croatia.
12. Fred & Elizabeth Brenchley, ***Stoker'in Denizaltısı***
Istanbul: Denizler Kitabevi, 2015, ISBN-10 9759268655
The book *Stoker's Submarine: Australia's Daring Raid on the Dardanelles on the Day of the Gallipoli Landing* was translated and printed in Turkey after the Turkish translation rights had been granted to Oğuz Aydemir by the Australian authors in 2000. The book is about Australia's raid on the Dardanelles on the day of the Gallipoli landing and tells the story of a remarkable naval hero (Dacre Stoker) and the men under his command. The AE2 submarine itself, still lying intact on the floor of the Sea of Marmara, is celebrated as the most tangible relic of Australia's role at Gallipoli.
13. Oğuz Aydemir, Ruggero Giuseppe Boscovich, ***2018 The Year of Troy and Roger Joseph Boscovich*** (*2018 Troya Yılı ve Roger Boskovich*)
Istanbul: Published privately, 2018
Boscovich (1711-1787), a physicist, astronomer, mathematician, philosopher, diplomat, poet, theologian, historian, and teacher, was one of the most outstanding personalities of the Enlightenment Period from Croatia. He travelled to Constantinople to observe the passing of Venus in front of the sun and took the same opportunity to examine and write about the ruins of Troy.
14. Oğuz Aydemir, ***The Istanbul Letters of Antun Vrančić: Croatian and English translation of selected Latin letters*** (*Carigradska Pisma Antuna Vrančića: Hrvatski i engleski prijevod odaranin latinskih pisama*)
Istanbul: Published privately, 2018, ISBN 978-975-2439-06-01
300 years old letters of Antun Vrančić, an *ambassador* of the Habsburg Empire to the Porte, were found by Aydemir in the National Széchenyi Library in Budapest. They were first translated from Latin into Croat, and then into English and published privately. It is a unique collection of Croatian cultural heritage.
15. Nazan Öçalır, ***An Unknown Hero of Our War of Independence: Arifzade Şahap Azmi Öçalır: 1896-1961***
Istanbul: Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayınları, 2020, ISBN-978-605-396-519-0
A biographic study of the memoirs of Aydemir's grandfather, based on his notes from the 1st World War about the Gaza and Palestine districts.



RECENT AND FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE

Jirousek, Charlotte. *Ottoman Dress and Design in the West: A Visual History of Cultural Exchange*. (Indiana University Press, 2019). ISBN: 10-025304216X.

Dinç, Enis. *Atatürk on Screen: Documentary Film and the Making of a Leader*. (I.B. Tauris, 2020). ISBN: 9780755602032.

El-Leithy, Tamer. *The Military Costumes of the Ottoman Empire*. (American University in Cairo, 2021). ISBN: 9775864046.

HISTORY.

Demirdöğen, Murat and Fikret Küçlü. *Ottoman Empire and The Republic of Turkey Numismatic Catalog*. (NumismaWorld, 2021). ISBN:10-605702690X.

Erickson, Edward J. *The Turkish War of Independence: A Military History, 1919-1923*. (Praeger, 2021). ISBN: 10-1440878412.

Esposito, Gabriele. *Armies of the Italian-Turkish War: Conquest of Libya, 1911-1912 (Men-at-Arms)*. (Osprey Publishing, 2020). ISBN: 10-1472839420.

Osmani, Basith M. *Original Turkish and TurkoFarsi States and Traditions: A Brief Outline of 1200 year+ Journey*. (Independently published, 2020). ISBN: 13- 979-8679650176.

Özoğlu, Hakan. *The Decline of the Ottoman Empire and The Rise of the Turkish Republic: Observations of an American Diplomat, 1919-1927 (Edinburgh Studies on Modern Turkey)*. (Edinburgh University Press, 2021). ISBN: 10-1474480373.

Mikhail, Alan. *God's Shadow: The Ottoman Sultan Who Shaped the Modern World*. (Faber & Faber, 2021). ISBN: 10- 0571331947.

River Editors, Charles. *The Russo-Turkish Wars: The History and Legacy of the Conflicts Between the Russian Empire and Ottoman Empire*. (Independently published, 2021). ISBN: 13- 979-8700837286.

Shearwood, Mark. *Waking the Bear: A Guide to Wargaming the Great Northern and Turkish Wars 1700-1721*. (Helion Wargames). (Helion and Company, 2021). ISBN: 10-1913336611.

Zeynaloglu, Jahangir. *A Concise History of Azerbaijan: From Azerbaijani Turkic Dynasties of the Middle Ages to the First Turkic Republic*. (Independently published, 2020). ISBN: 13-979-8645008543.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Fox, Margalit. *The Confidence Men: How Two Prisoners of War Engineered the Most Remarkable Escape in History*. (Random House, 2021). ISBN: 10-1984853848.

Pelkey, Tim. *Ottoman Excursion*. (SDP Publishing, 2020). ISBN: 10-1734240253.

Van Schaik, Gerjan. *Turkish Grammar*. (Oxford University Press, 2020). ISBN: 10-0198851502.

White, Jenny. *Turkish Kaleidoscope: Fractured Lives in a Time of Violence*. (Princeton University Press, 2021). ISBN: 10-0691205191.

POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

Çağaptay, Soner. *A Sultan in Autumn: Erdogan Faces Turkey's Uncontainable Forces (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy)*. (I.B. Tauris, 2021). ISBN: 10-0755642805.

Çandar, Cengiz. *Turkey's Neo-Ottomanist Moment – A Eurasianist Odyssey*. (Transnational Press, 2021) ISBN- 978-1-80135-044-0 / ISBN: 10-1801350440

Martin, Natalie. *The Securitisation of News in Turkey: Journalists as Terrorists? (The Palgrave Macmillan Series in International Political Communication)* (The Palgrave Macmillan, 2020). ISBN: 978-3-030-49380-6.

Öztürkmen, Arzu. *The Delight of Turkish Dizi: Memory, Genre and Politics of Television in Turkey* (Enactments). (Seagull Books, 2021). ISBN: 10-0857428985.

Philliou, Christine M. *Turkey: A Past Against History*. (University of California Press, 2021). ISBN: 10-0520276388.

Zanfirov, Alexandre. *Turkey Surface Warships 2020-2025*. (Independently published, 2020). ISBN: 13-979-8684180637.

SOCIOLOGY AND RELIGION

Çelik, Zeynep. *Europe Knows Nothing about the Orient: A Critical Discourse (1872-1932)*. (Koç University Press, 2021). ISBN: 10-6057685350.

Dorroll, Philip. *Islamic Theology in the Turkish Republic (Edinburgh Studies on Modern Turkey)*. (Edinburgh University Press, 2021). ISBN: 10-1474474926.

Goltz, Thomas C. *Zakhrifa: Memories of a Disappearing Middle East* (With a special epilogue on the Turkish northern Aegean). (Independently published, 2021). ISBN: 13-979-8502966054.

MISCELLANEOUS

Sivrioğlu, Somer and David Dale. *Anatolia: Adventures in Turkish Eating*. (Murdoch Books, 2020). ISBN: 10-1911632728.

Speece, Heidi H. *My Journey with Ernie: Lessons from a Turkey Dog*. (Independently published, 2021). ISBN: 13-979-8545304363.

Compiled by Arın Bayraktaroğlu

ONCE AGAIN: Subscription Reminder

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Appreciation

İlhan Başgöz

Gönül Pultar

1921 - 2021

Turkish novelist, scholar and academic
Founding President of the
Cultural Studies Association of Turkey
President of the World League of Tatars

İlhan Başgöz



Gönül Pultar

Prince Philip died on 9 April this year; a couple of months shy of becoming a centenarian. Four days later a senior member of Turkey's left-wing academia passed away in Ankara, also a few months before turning 100. Born when births in Anatolia were not immediately registered, he had opted to have his year of birth listed as 1923, the same year as the founding of the Republic of Turkey. The Republic would give him much, and he in turn would become one of her distinguished sons. He would also suffer the downside of the political upheavals in the country. One of the last living persons to have met Atatürk in person, he remained a staunch Kemalist to the end. He was also among the last of his kind, able to recite poetry by heart. Indiana University emeritus professor and renowned Turkish-American folklorist, İlhan Başgöz, led a dramatic life uncommon for an academic.

He was born in a village outside Sivas. His father, a village teacher, was a graduate of *İdadi* (the Ottoman equivalent of high school) and thus knew Arabic and Persian. His mother came from a Turcoman tribe, the Cadoğlus, which traced its roots to Oghuz ancestors who made Anatolia their home in the sixteenth century. Başgöz grew up hearing poems by folk poets his illiterate grandmother would ask to be recited from her book of folk poetry. He witnessed the arrival of the first train to his village. When his father retired, they moved to Sivas. Başgöz then witnessed the name of his school change from 'Hafız Recep' (Recep the Koran Recitor) to 'Ziya Gökalp', the Kemalist nationalist poet.

The *lise* he went to was housed in the building in which the Sivas Congress (September 1919) had taken place. The room in which Atatürk had stayed during the congress was preserved as a museum: the National Struggle (*Milli Mücadele*) was 'living history' for Başgöz and his schoolmates. Başgöz would later speak of Atatürk's visit to his school

class in Sivas as a “memorable event” in his life. The Republic had selected a number of secondary education schools in Anatolia to serve as cultural centers and had sent high-quality teachers to them. Sivas Lisesi had been one of those selected, so Başgöz received very good schooling there.

His university studies would be of even higher quality. When Başgöz entered the department of Turkish Language and Literature in 1940 in the newly opened Language-History and Geography Faculty in Ankara, he found among the faculty not only German Jewish scholars who had fled the Nazis, but also young Turkish scholars, such as Niyazi Berkes, Behice Boran, and Muzaffer Şerif. They came fresh from the universities at Harvard, Columbia, Chicago or their equivalents in Europe. They were also pioneers, e.g. one of them, Pertev Naili Boratav, attempted to establish folk literature studies as an academic discipline in Turkey. Fresh from a post-Depression USA or a Europe faced with fascism, their discourse indubitably possessed Marxist hues or anti-fascist accents – perhaps *de rigueur* for the Western intellectual at the time, but too jarring in the Ankara of İnönü’s *Milli Şef* (autocratic) presidency. They would mould Başgöz’s outlook. Graduating in 1944, Başgöz stayed on as research assistant and started working on a doctoral dissertation on folk tales with Boratav.

As the ‘red’ professors were sacked from the university, and taken to court in 1948, their students were asked to testify. What was expected of them was perjury. But Başgöz stood firm and remained loyal to truth and to his professors. He would be duly ‘rewarded’ when, after obtaining his doctoral degree in 1949, his employment at the university was terminated. His former professors, including Boratav, died in self-imposed exile.

Başgöz was given a position as a teacher trainee in a *lise* in Tokat, in the Black Sea region. He made the best of it, getting his students to correspond with authors in Istanbul, thus sparking in them an interest in literature. Some of his students became writers. One of them, Erdal Öz, published a short story *Bir Kuşu Tanımak* (Getting to Know a Bird) with a protagonist modeled on his teacher. Başgöz came out with flying colors from each inspector’s visit. A country boy, he was happy in Tokat, and was looking forward to being appointed a full-fledged teacher.

But, because of his past, that was not to be.

Back in Ankara, and jobless, he decided to do his military service – during which time he was arrested, in January 1953, and sent to prison in Istanbul. The *Demokrat Parti*, in government since 1950, had started a ‘communist purge’ in 1952. Başgöz appeared before a judge for the first time eleven months after his arrest and was immediately released.

More jobless days followed. He did odd jobs for newspapers or the radio and sold second-hand books, etc. He needed to earn a living as he got married and became the father of twin daughters in 1957. In the meantime, the Menderes regime was tightening its grip. In early May 1960, his wife told him how the police had come for him. Başgöz went into hiding in the home of a relative.

He would be woken up very early on the morning of 27 May 1960, to learn there had been a ‘revolution’. He hastened home, to find his brother-in-law, the musician Hikmet Şimşek. The two quickly worked together to compose a march with Başgöz writing a poem for the march. Immediately, Şimşek took the composition to the Conservatory of Music where a choir was taped singing the march. The march was broadcast the same day on the radio. Şimşek asked Başgöz to introduce the march. A fugitive only that morning, Başgöz suddenly found himself a spokesman of the new order on the state radio.

However, under the new anti-leftist military regime, Başgöz was still not able to find a job. But then he was informed that an American academic from UCLA was looking for a Turkish scholar to assist him in preparing a study of Atatürk's place in Turkish education. The Ford Foundation was funding the project. Başgöz applied and got the Ford grant, which stipulated that he first had to spend six months in London and help historian Bernard Lewis in another project. So he traveled in 1961 *en famille* to the UK.

At first, Lewis treated him haughtily. At the time Lewis's book, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* appeared, and Başgöz confronted the-then British author with all the mistakes he had made with Turkish names. "He took me seriously after that," said İlhan Hoca when he was recounting his life to Serpil Aygün Cengiz and the writer of these lines in 2002 (during the 'biographical interview' we were conducting with him, that would be published in 2003 as *Kardeşliğe bin selâm: İlhan Başgöz ile Söyleşi*, edited by Gönül Pultar).

The Başgöz family then headed to the New World. His two daughters, Aslı, a lawyer and a partner of the international law firm White and Case when she died in 2020, and Nesli, currently a chief surgeon at Harvard University, would be educated in the USA. However, the marriage suffered, and Başgöz and his wife Bedia (who predeceased him in 1997) divorced. These must have been difficult years, but Başgöz does not dwell on them in his 2017 autobiography, *Gemerek Nire, Bloomington Nire: Hayat Hikâyem* (published by İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları).

Başgöz started teaching Turkish at Berkeley in 1963. He renewed his contacts with German professors he knew from Ankara who had moved to the USA, and they collaborated on various projects. He transferred in 1965 to Indiana University as an assistant professor in the Program of Uralic and Altaic Studies, and a fellow of the Folklore Institute. He would found the Indiana University Turkish Studies Department, and a Turkish Studies publication program with funds obtained from Turkey.

When he retired in 1997, he had become a much-traveled scholar, attending many conferences and/or invited as keynote speaker internationally. In 1997 in the village of Güre, outside of Edremit, in the Marmara region of Turkey, he started a 'Folklore Summer School' with an international faculty comprising the likes of Henri Glassie and Halil İnalçık. He maintained the school until 2003. (For recollections by various students of the summer school, see the e-book *Türkiye'nin İlk Folklor Yaz Okulu İlhan Başgöz Güre Yaz Kursu*, a loving tribute to a beloved 'Hoca', edited in 2021 by Serpil Aygün Cengiz, who had been one of the earliest students of the school).

The days when he was regarded as a 'Commie' in Turkey were long over. Bilkent University asked him to join its newly established graduate Turkish Literature Department. At Bilkent, where I was teaching, I met Başgöz for the first time.

Other appointments followed. He went to Yüzüncü Yıl University in Van at the invitation of the rector, Yücel Aşkın. In 2003 he was the keynote speaker of the conference "Cultures of Turkey Culture of Turks" organized by that university and the Cultural Studies Association of Turkey (of which I was the founding president). Professor Başgöz was conferred a *doctor honoris causa* at the opening of the conference. He was later posted to the History Department at Middle East Technical University, where he was much venerated. He had found his niche in his native land, finally, in the ninth decade of his life.

These positions were punctuated by visits back to Bloomington where he still maintained a home. In 2016, health problems deferred his departure to Ankara. He was still in the USA when, in July 2020, Professor Cengiz, now the Chair of the Folklore Department at

Ankara University, organized over Zoom a launch party for her summer schoolbook. Başgöz's faithful assistant, Balım Sultan Yetgin, arranged for his participation from his home. That would be his last public event (see the 2020 e-book *İlhan Başgöz ile Güre Folklor Yaz Okulu Katılımcıları Buluşması - 18 Temmuz 2020* edited by Cengiz and others).

In August 2020 he fell and broke his ribs. In and out of hospital, and more or less bedridden, his last wish was to return and die in Turkey. His friends in Turkey were alerted, who alerted the journalists Emre Kongar, and Doğan Hızlan, and they alerted the public. Making an exception, in January 2021 the Turkish government sent a medical aircraft to bring him to Ankara. His arrival made the headlines nationally. He had become a monument.

Today, in Turkey Başgöz is considered one of the founders of folklore studies. In the USA, Başgöz contributed to the development of folklore studies and Turkish studies. He made American academics aware of the existence and scope of Turkish folk literature and Turkish folklore. He had gone to the USA with a huge collection of unpublished archival material; there was much he had to offer. Many of his books will be used as textbooks or source books in folklore studies. His novel interpretations of the poets Karacaoğlan and Yunus Emre are still to be fully appreciated by scholars of Turkish literature internationally, or by the 'National Education' establishment in Turkey.

The major achievement Başgöz will be remembered for, I believe, is his having established, once and for all, that an oral text is always subject to change: it is, by definition, not a definitive text. The *âşık*, or bard will construct the tale (or epic poem) according to the circumstances under which he recites it. This is not a novel idea: Russian Turcologists such as Radloff and Zhirmunski had already written about it. But this had remained a mere theory in folklore studies. During the autobiographical interview Başgöz recounted how he returned to Turkey in 1967, went to Ardahan in northeastern Anatolia, found Sabit Müdâmi, a tale singer, and made him tell the same tale to two very different audiences in two different settings (one made up of peasants and artisans, in the village coffeehouse; the other of instructors and functionaries, in the Teachers' Union Headquarters). Two very different tales emerged. Based on this experiment, Başgöz presented a paper at the American Folklore Society's next conference, and then published it as an article titled "The Tale Singer and His Audience" (in *Folklore: Communication and Performance*, edited by Dan Ben-Amos and Kenneth Goldstein, published in the Hague by Mouton in 1975).

For those who do not read Turkish, his collection of essays *Turkish Folklore and Oral Literature* (edited by Kemal Sılay, and published in 1998 by the Indiana University Turkish Studies Series Publications) is a good introduction to his work. Those who can read Turkish should not miss, the festschrift in his honor edited by Metin Karadağ and published in 2019 as the 600-page "Prof. Dr İlhan Başgöz special issue" of *Folklor - Edebiyat Dergisi* (volume 25, number 100), as well as the three already mentioned works, namely, his autobiography, the book-length candid autobiographical interview, and the summer school e-book.

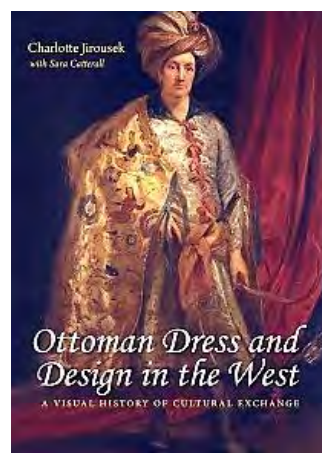
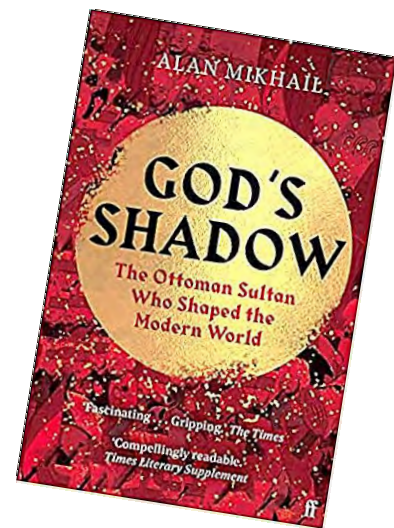


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Random suggestions from the Book List, reminiscent of the main topic of the last Spring Symposium



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