

# **Turkish Area Studies Review**

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# BATAS

## SYMPOSIUM 2022

### Emmanuel College, Cambridge

**Saturday 28 May 2022  
10.00 am to 4.30 pm**

**The Annual General Meeting of BATAS will follow at 4.40 pm**

Details (programme, abstracts and booking instructions) will be available on the BATAS website nearer the time.

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### **The 2022 John Martin Lecture**

**Friday 11 November 2022**

**Venue and time to be confirmed**

Speaker:

**Professor Ersin Kalaycıoğlu**

Sabancı University, Istanbul

on

**Neo-patrimonial Sultanism's Ordeal with Popular Elections**



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

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## Editorial

The co-editors are once again pleased to present another very interesting and varied collection of articles and book reviews for our readers. The first article is a summary of the last John Martin Lecture in November which was presented by the well-known Ottoman historian Colin Imber – once more by Zoom. This was a fascinating and highly entertaining lecture on ‘The Joy of Fatwas’ in the Ottoman period, and we are sure that our readers will find the synopsis of his presentation very informative.

Also included are two related articles from the Webinar which was held last October by two young scholars from British and German universities. These cover the specialised topics of the Armeno-Turkish Print Media and Cultural and Religious Relations between Turkish-Speaking Orthodox Christians and Muslims.

In a well-established tradition we are treated to contributions on recent political and economic developments in Turkey by Andrew Finkel and Mina Toksöz. In these articles mention is also made of the possible impact on the ongoing war in Ukraine. In addition, there are other pieces on contentious political topics which cover Turkey and the PKK in Syria and Iraq and an overview of the continuing problems and issues with regard to Cyprus.

The section on History, Society and Culture is particularly rich and diverse. It includes articles on Hagia Sophia, another piece on the Dodecanese Islands which is a follow-up to a related article published in an earlier issue of the *Review*, and a piece concerning issues relating to the Keban Dam and the Euphrates River. There is also an article on Ottoman-language translation which focuses on the work of Mahmut Effendi.

Several BATAS members have written such promising book reviews that the reader is almost forced to want to read the original!

We, the co-editors, wish to extend our thanks to all our contributors and to our hardworking and ever reliable team of proof-readers. This will be the last issue to be co-edited by Gareth Winrow, and he wishes to give his sincere thanks to his colleague Sigrid Martin for all the help and support she has given him over the last three years. She, in her turn, would like to emphasize that it was a pleasure to be working with Gareth, relying on his manifold connections, promptness of work and good humour.

We are currently in the process of looking for a new co-editor (do, please, refer to p 76 for details of this position in the current issue). Arın Bayraktaroğlu has kindly offered to be acting co-editor for the next issue only.

Sigrid-B Martin  
Co-Editor

Gareth Winrow  
Co-Editor

+

**The 2021 John Martin Lecture  
Online Lecture Through Zoom  
27 November 2021**



**The Joy of  
Fatwas:  
A Glimpse into  
the  
Ottoman Mind**

by Colin Imber  
Ottoman historian,  
Reader in Turkish (RTD),  
University of Manchester

**Fatwas**

Fatwas might seem at first to be a particularly joyless subject. A fatwa is, after all, no more than a legal opinion issued in answer to a question by a recognised authority known as a mufti (or *müftü* in Turkish). What is more, they lack enlivening detail: the protagonists in the case are either not named at all, or given pseudonyms – Zeyd and Amr for men, and Hind and Zeyneb for women. All details of the case that are not strictly relevant are omitted and the answers brief. A consequence of their anonymity is that we do not know – although occasionally we may guess – who it was who asked the question, and in what circumstances. Nonetheless, fatwas had an important influence on life in the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman chief mufti, known from the late 16th century as the *şeyhülislam*, was the supreme legal authority in the Empire and anyone, from the sultan to his humblest subject, could ask him for a fatwa. He or she would present their problem to the *şeyhülislam*'s office, where the legal clerks would re-write the question for the *şeyhülislam* to answer and sign. The questioner would receive back a slip of paper with the question re-written, answered and signed. It is the fact that any Ottoman Muslim could present questions to the *şeyhülislam* or to his humbler counterparts in provincial cities that allows us to catch tantalising glimpses of the day-to-day worries and concerns of the Ottoman-in-the-street. These, to a modern reader, can often seem very strange. Take, for example, the following fatwa of Ibn Nujaym (1520-1563), a jurist and mufti in Ottoman Cairo:

He was asked about someone who swore not to enter so-and-so's house. If he climbed down [into] it from the wall, has he broken his

oath or not? [The mufti] replied: 'Yes, he has broken his oath by [doing] this.'

Or the following from Kemalpaşazade, *şeyhülislam* from 1525 to 1534:

Zeyd says to Amr: 'You don't know your faith! I'll get a fatwa about you!' and Amr replies: 'You can roll up your fatwa and stick it up your arse!' What is required in law?

Answer: An eloquent chastisement and a renewal of faith are necessary.

## Oaths

These two fatwas are typical of many thousands that answer queries on oaths and profane language, subjects that occupy many chapters in the writings of Islamic jurists and fill many pages of Ottoman fatwa collections. An oath – to greatly oversimplify – is a contract made with God to do or not to do something. The simplest way to make an oath is to pronounce a valid formula – usually 'By God!' (Arabic *wa'llahi!* or Turkish *vallah!*) – before the statement of intent, for example: 'By God, I will/will not do X'. Even if the oath is spoken by mistake, in jest or under coercion, it remains valid. If it remains unfulfilled, the oath-maker must atone for the breach by freeing a slave, feeding and clothing ten poor people, or fasting for three successive days.

In answering the endless questions they received on broken oaths, muftis had first to decide whether the oath-formula had been valid. In this example, Abdürrahim, *şeyhülislam* from 1715 to 1716, gives his verdict on a misplaced vowel:

If Zeyd swears an oath pronouncing *vallah* with a [final] *a* (i.e. *vallaha*), is this a valid oath?

Answer: Yes.

After examining the validity or otherwise of the oath-formula, the mufti had next to look at the statement of intent to determine whether or not the oath had been broken. This was not always straightforward. Here is a question put to Ibn Nujaym in Cairo:

He was asked about a man who swore he would not eat from this flour, and then eats from the bread [made from] it. Has he broken his oath or not?

[The mufti] replied: Yes, he has broken his oath.

The problem here is that the flour which the oath-maker swore not to eat has changed its nature during the process of bread-making, and the question is whether it can still be defined as flour. Juristic opinions on this problem differed, but here Ibn Nujaym has taken a hard line.

More common, and usually more troublesome, were suspended oaths. These are oaths which specify a condition, and divorce or emancipation of a slave as a penalty if the condition is broken: 'If I do X, my wife is divorced/my slave is freed.' This fatwa is from Ebu's-su'ud (*şeyhülislam* 1545-1572):

Zeyd says to his wife Hind: 'If I get into bed with you, be divorced from me with three divorces!' If Zeyd does it with Hind on a carpet or a mattress, is Hind divorced from Zeyd with three divorces?

Answer: No, [but] they must never get into bed again.



As with all types of oath, the speaker's real intentions in pronouncing an oath on divorce are irrelevant, as are the circumstances in which he pronounced it. All that matters is the literal sense of his words, as Ibn Nujaym demonstrates:

He was asked about a person who was owed a debt by another person. [The debtor] swore on pain of divorce that he would pay it at a specified time. Another person pays it in his absence, without his permission. Does the divorce go ahead or not?

Answer: Yes, the divorce goes ahead in the absence of a payment from [the debtor himself] at the time that was sworn.

The fact that the creditor got his money back does not matter. In not paying him back at the time specified, the debtor has broken his oath. The same rules as apply to oaths on divorce also apply to oaths on emancipation. This is from Ebu's-su'ud:

Zeyd says to the slave-girl Zeyneb whom he bought from Amr: 'I did not buy you to sell. If ever I sell [you] be free from me!' If Zeyd gives the said slave-girl to Bekr, does she become free?

Answer: No. Even if he concluded a valid sale, his ownership would cease the moment he sold [her].

The questioner here wondered whether giving the slave as a gift, rather than selling her, would trigger emancipation. It obviously would not, as he had sworn not to sell her: he had not sworn any oath not to give her away. However, as Ebu's-su'ud points out, even if he had sold her, he would have lost ownership of her at the point of sale, and with his loss of ownership he would have lost his power to set her free.

## Profanities

Profanities, defined as *alfaz al-kufr* ('words of unbelief'), were as consequential as oaths in the everyday lives of Ottoman Muslims. By uttering a profanity, a Muslim becomes an unbeliever and so faces prosecution for apostasy. At the same time, because such people have lost their faith and are no longer Muslims, their marriages are dissolved. Before a prosecution, however, it was essential to establish whether the offending words constituted unbelief (*kufr*, Turkish *küfür*). The classical jurists devote many pages to classifying profanities, but this example from Ibn Bazzaz (d. 1414) illustrates a general principle: '[A woman] says: "Stick a donkey's dick up your Science's arse!" She is an unbeliever if what she means by this is 'religious Science' (*ilm*, Turkish *ilim*). Here the issue is not the woman's coarse language – although she might face punishment for this – but the possibility that she insulted religious law and religious learning and therefore religion itself. 'Insulting religion' includes insults to God, the Prophet, angels, heaven and hell; or on earth, insulting mosques, the sharia, religious learning or men of learning. As with oaths, it makes no difference whether the words were spoken light-heartedly or unintentionally.

The penalty for uttering a profanity depends on the seriousness of the words spoken. If a person 'curses the Prophet' (*sabb al-nabi*), the punishment is death. Otherwise, to return to the Muslim fold, a blasphemer must undergo a formal 'renewal of faith' and if he or she is married, a 'renewal of marriage' in a ceremony before a *qadi* (Turkish *kadı*) or imam. The Ottoman muftis were scrupulous in following these rules. In this fatwa of Abdürrahim, a man is guilty of 'cursing the Prophet':

Zeyd (God forbid and again God forbid!) constantly insults God and the Prophet. In law, what should happen to Zeyd?

Answer: If he had insulted God [alone], he would have escaped with renewal of faith and marriage. But because he insulted the Prophet, he is killed as a fixed punishment.

A 'fixed punishment' (*hadd*) is a penalty in the sharia that is fixed by law, leaving no room for judicial discretion. In the next example, Çatalcalı Ali, *şeyhülislam* between 1674-1686 and again in 1692, rules on a case where a man has declared something illicit (*haram*) to be licit (*helal*):

Zeyd fornicates with Hind. When 'Amr says to him: 'Why did you fornicate?' he replies: 'Fornication is licit.' What should happen to Zeyd?

Answer: Renewal of faith and marriage are required.

A mufti might also add a further penalty to the requirement to renew faith and marriage. Here Abdürrahim imposes 'chastisement' on the miscreant for his vile language, and requires a 'renewal' if, by insulting a religious scholar, he meant also to insult religion:

The ignorant Amr says to the scholar Zeyd: 'You donkey! You tale-bearer. You false witness! I don't rate you as much as the dirty hair on my balls!' What should happen to Amr?

Answer: An eloquent chastisement and, if he meant to belittle [religious] Science (*ilm*), renewal of faith and marriage.

In less serious cases, such as when a person declares something which is disapproved (*makruh*) rather than actually forbidden, to be licit, they need only to ask God's forgiveness. This is what Kemalpaşazade demands in the following case:

What is required in law if a woman says: 'Dancing is permitted (*helal*) for us: it is forbidden (*haram*) for men'?

Answer: She must seek [God's] forgiveness.

For some women the rules on profanities seemed to offer an opportunity. Since a woman cannot pronounce a divorce, it is almost impossible for her to escape an unwanted marriage without her husband's consent. However, if she utters a profanity, the marriage automatically dissolves, and some women hoped that, by blaspheming and then refusing to re-marry, they would be free. The classical jurists were determined to 'bar the gate' to women using this stratagem, and Ottoman muftis followed their lead. Here is Ebu's-su'ud:

Hind asks the learned man Zeyd: 'How do I get rid of my husband Amr?' and he instructs her: 'You should say in the presence of several people, "I have become an infidel."' What should happen?

Answer: That accursed man becomes an infidel before Hind does. It is permissible (*mubah*) to execute him. Hind should be forced back to the faith and re-married to Amr.

The trick for a dissatisfied wife was to make sure that the profanity emanated not from her, but from her husband. In this case, even Ebu's-su'ud had to concede that she had the choice whether or not to re-marry:

Zeyd utters some profane words, and a renewal of marriage becomes necessary. His wife Hind does not agree to be married again. Can she be forced to re-marry?



Answer: There is no need for a marriage by force. Since the profanity did not emanate from her, she should not be forced.

## Conclusion

Innumerable Ottoman fatwas survive from the sixteenth century to the twentieth and, of these, thousands deal with cases of oaths and profanities. The volume of cases is an indication of how far the rules of Islamic law had permeated Ottoman society – or, at least, *sunni* Muslim society in large Ottoman cities – and gives us a glimpse of the mindset that allowed this law to operate. An oath is a contract made with God and a profanity is a rejection of God’s law and religion and, for the law to be effective, every person must believe that they are under God’s constant surveillance. God hears everything they say and follows them everywhere they go, even into the bedroom, and if they fail to expiate a broken oath or renew their faith after blaspheming, they will be answerable for their failure on the Day of Judgement. In brief, this was a deeply pious and God-fearing society. This fear of God in turn gave great authority to the learned – the *ulema* – who were the only persons qualified to interpret God’s law and, while fatwas sometimes reflect public resentment at the power and privilege of the *ulema*, rejection of the law and of religion itself is vanishingly rare. Nonetheless, there are a very few cases where instead of suffering a temporary lapse of faith by uttering a profanity, a person openly rejects religious belief. Abdürrahim makes it quite clear what should happen to such people:

Zeyd is an imam in a mosque. He says (God forbid!) ‘There is no Heaven or Hell. Mankind grows like grass and ends like grass!’ In law, what should happen to Zeyd?

Answer: He should be killed without delay.



## Recent Developments in Turkey (2021/22)

**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

Economists refer to it as the Wile E. Coyote effect – the lag between cause and effect depicted in that millisecond of eternity as Roadrunner’s cartoon nemesis is running in place- that place being the thin air off a cliff edge where there is an awfully long way to fall. It is also a metaphor for the apprehension hanging over the Turkish body politic, a delayed sense of shock before a new reality sets in. A variety of factors – the dire state of the economy, pending presidential and parliamentary elections, the new security architecture that must emerge from the devastation in Ukraine – mean that the usual clichés of “business as usual” or “muddling through” no longer apply.

The economy, the subject of more detailed analysis elsewhere in this *Review*, was fragile even before the Russian onslaught into Ukraine. A highly unorthodox New Economic Model, introduced at the end of November 2021 and which finance minister, Nureddin Nebati pitched to sceptical investors at a London roadshow<sup>1</sup> the following February, always appeared unlikely to provide the government with the breathing space it would need to go to an early election with any degree of confidence. The brunt of the policy (in contradiction to the action of central banks elsewhere in the world) to slash interest rates, was intended to rescue Turkey from the tyranny of high borrowing costs and short-term investment. Instead, it has delivered the ordinary consumer to astronomic inflation and real immiseration. The hope had been that a cheaper lira would stimulate export-led growth and that Turkey could bide its time until summer foreign tourism revenues kicked in. An interest rate cut late November 2021 caused the Turkish lira to lose 15% of its value to reach 13.45 to the dollar, only to crash past the 18 TL to the dollar mark the following month. This prompted massive state intervention as well a scheme to stabilise the currency by indexing lira savings to foreign currency – creating a hostage to fortune in the event of another devaluation crisis. Then came the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The currency is currently trading at just under 15 TL to the dollar.

It is a grim curio that on the 24 February, the day of the Russian invasion, the lira suffered more damage than the rouble, the result of Turkey's exposure to high international commodity prices for oil, gas, flour, and sunflower oil. Russia (10%) and Ukraine (4%) make up a substantial slice of Turkish tourism revenues and hopes that the industry would rebound to pre-Covid 2019 levels of \$35 billion now seem forlorn. Simone Kaslowski, the head of Turkey's largest business confederation (TUSİAD) has put the initial price tag of the Russian invasion to Turkey at \$US 35-40 billion.<sup>2</sup>

The 12-month consumer price index at the end of February was 54.4%, up from 48.7% in January. Growth has indeed been high (11% increase in GDP for 2021) but much of this has come from pent-up, covid-suppressed consumer demand. Growth, according to World Bank estimates, is unlikely to exceed 2% in 2022.<sup>3</sup> Inflation has quickly eroded the 54% rise in the minimum wage which the government declared at the end of December 2021 – an increase according to the NG polling organisation,<sup>4</sup> only 5% thought was adequate for an average family of four and only 50% thought adequate for a family of two. Even more dramatically, some 73% of those surveyed, said their monthly income failed to cover their basic needs.

“Anyone not complaining about prices is either a thief or crazy,” tweeted the popular stand-up comedian, Cem Yilmaz.<sup>5</sup>



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/economy/turkey-pitches-new-economic-model-signals-new-steps-to-shore-up-lira>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.duvarenglish.com/turkish-industry-and-business-association-chair-simone-kaslowski-says-turkeys-inflation-high-households-welfare-loss-out-of-control-news-60602>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/02/25/global-and-domestic-challenges-weigh-on-outlook-for-turkish-economy-in-2022>

<sup>4</sup> <https://ngteknoloji.com>

<sup>5</sup> <https://twitter.com/tele1comtr/status/1490314936630796290?s=20&t=25Y9nyCoMGzIGmHk30cXUw>

There were plenty of complaints, even some civil resistance, to hikes in the price of electricity.<sup>6</sup> Turkey's Alevi religious community went on a payment strike after their places of worship were made subject to the commercial increase of 125%— a rise that was particularly galling given that the Department of Religious Affairs pays even for the outside illumination of Sunni mosques. The government backed down, merely charging Alevi *cemevis* the domestic tariff rise of 25%, a move still short of recognising the place of worship of a sizeable minority of Turkey's population. Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, leader of the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), also said he would not pay his own electricity bill until the government undid the rise in price but stopped short of calling for a boycott.<sup>7</sup> President Erdoğan emerged from a (28th February) cabinet meeting to announce personally a cut in VAT from 18% to 8% percent for domestic users as well as a reduction for small businesses.

Not surprisingly this has been a winter of labour unrest, when workers at more than 60 companies "ranging from textiles to transportation, mining and construction joined mostly short-lived strikes", according to Bloomberg.<sup>8</sup> This included a one-day walkout by health workers<sup>9</sup> with future stoppages planned. Many doctors have given up on the system altogether with the Turkish Medical Association reporting that some 1,400 doctors emigrated abroad last year compared to 4,000 over the previous decade.<sup>10</sup> This, in turn, has prompted an open row between the Turkish president and the head of the Turkish Doctors Union with the former saying "if they want to leave, let them," and the latter saying that it would be Mr Erdoğan who would be leaving when he was voted out at the next presidential election.<sup>11</sup>

It remains to be seen whether this will indeed be the case. The Justice and Development Party (AKP)'s and Tayyip Erdoğan's reputation and popularity has in large part been based on its ability to be a steady hand on the tiller after the 2000-2001 economic crisis – and by providing a pathway out of the bad old days of the 1990s, characterised by unstable governments, civil unrest in the Kurdish majority provinces, a high rate of inflation that eroded savings, plus high rates of interests that encouraged a rentier economy. The symbol of this deep malaise was a constantly devaluing currency that kept accumulating zeros so that a fifty million taxi fare was payable with a single banknote. Credit cards were far too risky instruments for most households; mortgages hardly existed. So, now, to see the rate of inflation again climbing towards 60% and the lira on a precarious downhill slope is to witness Turkey retreating back into the desert from the promised land into which it had been led.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.encazip.com/elektrik-zammi#2022-yilinda-elektrige-ne-kadar-zam-geldi2021-yilinda-elektrige-ne-kadar-zam-geldi>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-02-10/turkish-opposition-leader-says-he-won-t-pay-electricity-bills>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-01/strikes-over-turkey-s-cost-of-living-crisis-raise-pressure-on-erdogan>

<sup>9</sup> <https://ahvalnews.com/healthcare-workers/healthcare-workers-preparing-another-turkey-wide-strike-over-low-pay-working>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/07/world/asia/turkey-inflation-doctors.html>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/ttbden-erdogana-gidiyorlarsa-gitsinler-yaniti-2023te-ogidecek-haber-1555819>

As discussed in the previous *Review*, it is still the brave commentator who would write Mr Erdoğan's political obituary. However, opinion polls – and common sense – continue to show the People's (*Cumhur*) Alliance (the AKP and its de facto coalition partner, the Nationalist Action Party – MHP) failing to get much more than 40% of the vote. Opinion polls consistently show that over 50% of the electorate are determined not to vote for Mr Erdoğan. In a presidential contest, this means the opposition candidate winning on the second if not initial round.

It seems likely that the opposition candidate will be the leader of the CHP, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu. He did not so much toss his hat as place it gently in the ring during an interview with Reuters<sup>12</sup> in which he said it would be an honour if the other party leaders in his Nation (*Millet*) Alliance would have him as their candidate. There is some, perhaps over-ingenuous, speculation that Mr Kılıçdaroğlu is a stalking horse, drawing flak away from potential candidates like the mayors Ekrem İmamoğlu of Istanbul or Mansur Yavaş of Ankara who score better in opinion polls. However, were these mayors to run they would have to step down from office, almost certainly handing their cities over to the AKP who dominate the municipal assembly and thus surrender an important election time resource.

The timing of a major opposition initiative was unfortunate, coming as it did on 28 February when public attention was on the Russian onslaught. However, six opposition parties including the CHP and the nationalist right İyi or Good Party delivered a joint programme at least to point Turkey back in the direction of democracy, address corruption and crony-oriented procurement policies, lift restrictions on freedom of assembly and freedom of expression, and guarantee independence for the judiciary and state regulatory agencies (including the Central Bank). Whatever scepticism such promises might evoke, other reforms, like the return to a parliamentary system of governance, are more obvious forms of wishful thinking as they would require constitutional amendment and hence a two third parliamentary majority. This is not the case for the proposed abolition of the Higher Education Board which oversees all Turkish universities, and which has become an object of derision. A proposal to lower the electoral threshold for parties qualifying for entry into parliament, from the current 10% to 3% could also be legislated and would benefit newly formed breakaway parties of the right. However, this is being overshadowed by a government proposal to lower the threshold to 7% which would only benefit the MHP and replace a system whereby multiple parties could combine on a list. In any case, changes to the electoral law can only go into effect one year after being legislated which would be the parliament going its full term.

The pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) was conspicuous by its absence at this show of opposition unity. They are currently under threat of being closed by the Constitutional Court and a swathe of the party's MPs face prosecutions. Authorities have refused to release a former co-chair of the party, Ayşe Tuğluk who has been in prison for five years, despite a forensic medical

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/markets/deals/turkeys-opposition-leader-looks-emerge-erdogans-shadow-2022-02-21/>

report that she suffers from trauma-induced dementia.<sup>13</sup> The charismatic former leader Selahattin Demirtaş also remains in jail despite European Court of Human Rights decisions demanding his release.

Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu has on more than one occasion made it clear that he believed Mr Demirtaş, along with imprisoned philanthropist Osman Kavala is being unjustly detained. To be assured of winning office, the opposition needs to court the Kurdish vote – not just in the southeast but in metropolitan centres where ethnic Kurds are a sizeable majority. The precedent for this is the support the HDP lent the CHP in the 2019 local elections, allowing opposition candidates to win the mayorships of major cities. The recent visit by Mr Kılıçdaroğlu to Diyarbakir, where he met with the spouses of dead and imprisoned Kurdish nationalist lawyers and politicians, and apologised for the CHP's mistakes and past neglect, can be seen as a continuation of this tacit alliance and an effort to show himself as a unity candidate. His ability to take a more aggressive stand on Kurdish rights remains impeded by a streak of Turkish nationalist sentiment within his own party as well as the need to maintain cooperation with the right wing İyi Party of Meral Akşener – a likely prime minister should Turkey return to a parliamentary system.



While pundits continue to predict an election as early as in the first half of this year, this seems increasingly implausible given the government's lack of room to manoeuvre to staunch the wounds in the economy and thus reverse waning support. Turkish electoral law remains untested, but one interpretation is that Mr Erdoğan would be ineligible to run for a third term (or second under the "super" presidential system approved in the 2017 referendum – held under emergency law) if he serves out his full term to June 2023. To stay in office, beyond that he must opt for an early poll. This has even led to speculation, improbable as it sounds, that rather than go to election he might lose, he will simply not run at all. There is equal speculation that the government might declare a state of emergency to defer elections or do something to interfere with the free and fair nature of the vote.

All this means that both the AKP and the bureaucracy (including the judiciary) it has created in its image, must at the very least be entertaining the prospect of what would, in effect, be a change of regime.

A conceivable outcome of this whiff of change is that the civil service is now dragging its heels rather than be held responsible for bending the rules in AKP's direction. Mr Kılıçdaroğlu encouraged this spirit of independence explicitly when he issued what amounted to a warning to the bureaucracy of which he was once a member (as head of the Social Insurance Institution):

"You are honourable officers of this state, not the Erdoğan family. This is your last call from your elder brother, or Uncle Kılıçdaroğlu [i.e. as a former civil servant himself]: As of Monday, October 18th, you will be responsible for all your support for the illegal demands of this system.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/europe-central-asia/turkey/turkey-must-immediately-release-aysel-tugluk-and-other-severely-ill>



You can't get away with this dirty work by saying 'I was following orders.' Whatever is being done to you illegally, stop as of Monday. Get your hands off these illegal parallel systems."<sup>14</sup>

Uncertainty about the government's future might conceivably account for the ambivalence exhibited by the judiciary in a series of well publicised cases including that of Sedef Kabaş, a prominent TV presenter, who was taken into custody in the middle of the night last January after implicitly criticising the president on a television programme by referring to a proverb which she later posted on Twitter ("a bull does not become a king just by entering the palace, but the palace becomes a barn"). Ms Kabaş refused to request an adjournment and was sentenced to 28 months in prison (rather than the eight years, two months demanded by the prosecution) and has been released pending an appeal. Another potential example of bureaucratic boldness was the declaration by a prosecutor for the Council of State, that the highly controversial presidential decision, one year ago, to unilaterally withdraw Turkey from the Istanbul Convention (against violence towards women) was invalid and that treaties could only be abnegated through an act of parliament.<sup>15</sup>

Former-editors of the now defunct *Taraf* newspaper Yasemin Çongar, Ahmet Altan, and Yıdıray Uğur were sentenced (after a trial lasting six years) to 3 years and 4 months each for "obtaining" secret documents under Article 327 of the penal code<sup>16</sup> – but also remain free pending appeal. The document in question was a long-expired war plan which the newspaper never published and which the accused say they had never seen. A fourth defendant, Mehmet Baransu was sentenced to 13 years in prison and has been behind bars for the last 7 years on remand for this case as well as on other charges related to his alleged involvement with the Fethullah Gülen movement.

The number of journalists in prison in Turkey now stands at 57 (compared to 79 this time last year<sup>17</sup>). Independent journalists remain in danger, as illustrated by the murder in an armed attack on 19 February of Güngör Arslan, publisher and news editor of local news site Ses Kocaeli. In his last article, Arslan had written about corruption allegations against Tahir Büyükkakın, the AKP Kocaeli mayor. Some five suspects have been taken into custody but to date there has been no official statement on the case.<sup>18</sup>

\* \* \*

This article is being written as the bloody Russian onslaught into Ukraine appears to be settling into an even bloodier war of attrition. If cognitive dissonance is one way of describing Wile E. Coyote's initial reaction to peddling above the abyss, it could also describe many in Turkey's efforts to adjust to the confusing kaleidoscope of this grim new world.

<sup>14</sup> <https://yetkinreport.com/en/2021/10/18/erdogan-kilicdaroglu-bureaucracy-row-and-its-backstage/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.duvarenglish.com/turkish-council-of-state-prosecutor-says-only-parliament-can-quit-istanbul-convention-news-60583>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.expressioninterrupted.com/mehmet-baransu/>

<sup>17</sup> According to the tally kept by the freedom of expression project Expression Interrupted: <https://expressioninterrupted.com/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.seskocaeli.com/makale/9669175/tugrul-kirankaya/gungor-arслан-cinayetinde-bir-aciklama-yok>



As one might expect, Turkish foreign policy is driven by both ideology and a deep sense of pragmatism. “The world is bigger than five [permanent members of the UN Security Council]’ was a watchword then Prime Minister Erdoğan first coined in 2013 to describe an eagerness to adopt a more non-aligned posture and to establish Turkey as an alternative centre of regional power in what was seen as a decline of Western influence. A strong ‘Eurasianist’ wing in the Turkish military and political establishment has attempted to deepen ties with Moscow, where necessary decoupling opposing interests in conflicts in Syria and Libya, and Nagorno-Karabakh with increasing economic dependence in tourism and energy. Another way of putting this is that Russia is the devil Turkey knows.

The Eurasianist wing was if anything strengthened after the 2016 abortive military coup in Turkey, which many in the ruling AKP have openly accused the United States of having a hand in. The Erdoğan government famously exposed itself to the wrath of the US Congress for insisting on the purchase of Russian-made S-400 defence anti-aircraft missiles, a purchase which resulted in Turkey’s expulsion from the programme both to purchase and participate in the manufacturing F35 jet fighters.

Despite being a member of NATO since 1952, Turkey came bottom of the league among NATO states in public approval for the alliance, according to a 2019 Pew Survey (21%), scoring only slightly higher than non-NATO Russia (16%).<sup>19</sup> This antipathy is reflected in public attitudes towards Ukraine. On the brink of the conflict, there was empathy in Turkey for the Russian sense of grievance. Yusuf Kaplan, a religious right-wing columnist on the *Yeni Şafak* newspaper speculated that the threat of conflict was a Western plot to “encircle and suffocate Turkey” by drawing it into taking sides. “Is Soros behind this?” he wondered.<sup>20</sup>

“The majority of the Turkish public believes that NATO sacrificed Ukraine to a proxy war between the West and Russia,” wrote Fehim Tastekin.<sup>21</sup> One of the Turkish president’s most dedicated supporters and one-time press baron Ethem Sancak, called NATO a “cancer and a tumor” during an early March visit to Moscow and insisted that Ankara would never have sold its Bayraktar drones to Ukraine if it had known they would be used against Russian troops.<sup>22</sup> This, of course, beggars credulity. Not only had Turkey been supplying Ukraine with its Bayraktar TB2 armed drones (manufactured by a company headed by Mr Erdoğan’s son-in-law) that proved effective in stopping the Russian advance, but it had plans for further cooperation with Ukrainian manufacturers in building engines for the new generation of Akıncı high-altitude, unmanned armed combat vehicles.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/02/09/nato-seen-favorably-across-member-states/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/yusuf-kaplan/hedef-turkiyenin-kusatilmasi-ve-savasi-tilerek-bogulmasi-olabilir-mi-2061977>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/03/ukraine-war-shakes-turkeys-ties-both-russia-and-nato>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.yenicaggazetesi.com.tr/erdoganin-gozdesi-is-adami-ethem-sancak-moskovada-ruslari-yalayip-yuttu-bayraktar-sihalarin-boyle-kullanilacagini-bilmiyorduk-ukraynayi-satti-516942h.htm>

At the other end of the spectrum, artist and former CHP deputy, Bedri Bayram wrote an open letter, berating fellow leftists still able to understand (and hence *tout pardonner*) Moscow's position or who remained silent at the growing tragedy befalling the civilian population in Ukraine "Who buried your humanity?" he asked.<sup>23</sup> However, this may be a contrarian view, at least in the sense that Turkish sympathy for the great floods of war refugees may have been exhausted by the hospitality it has given those fleeing the war in Syria. The economic fallout of Ukraine is considerable, but the view is that the moral responsibility for the conflict belongs to Europe.

A report in the *New York Times* suggested that, up to the very last minute, the Turkish government did not believe the invasion would actually happen, the evidence being its reluctance to evacuate embassy and citizens from Kyiv.<sup>24</sup> When hostilities did break out, Ankara condemned the invasion as "unacceptable" while promising to be an honest broker between the warring states. President Erdoğan made calls to both the Russian and Ukrainian presidents. On 10 March, the two countries' foreign ministers had face to face discussions under Turkish auspices in the Mediterranean city of Antalya – albeit without publicly tangible results.<sup>25</sup>

Again, the question from a (very) narrow Turkish perspective was whether the war would confirm the country's strategic importance (and thus improve the political fortunes of its president). Or would Turkey, the past master at decompartmentalising its relations with Russia, now be forced to abandon this policy of "strategic balancing" and tow a more conventional line?

Not necessarily, according to Selin Koru, writing in the useful War on the Rocks website:

"If President Vladimir Putin wins a major military victory against Ukraine and is able to weather the economic and diplomatic consequences, it will only accelerate Turkey's move into a post-NATO stance. The failure of NATO to stop Moscow's irredentism will confirm Ankara's beliefs about the waning relevance of the alliance and fuel its hopes for a new era in geopolitics."<sup>26</sup>

The immediate challenge Ankara faced was whether to evoke the 1936 Montreux Convention and thus close the Bosphorus and Dardanelles to warships, sealing the passage from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. It did so four days after the invasion. "It is not a couple of air strikes now, the situation in Ukraine is officially a war... We will implement the Montreux Convention," Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Turkey's foreign minister, told CNN.<sup>27</sup> The move was praised by Ukraine and Western allies but, in the short term at least, it has had only a modest effect on the Russian war effort. Montreux prevents free passage

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/bedri-baykam/sizin-humanistliginizi-sevsinler-1914526>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/world/europe/ukraine-russia-turkey-putin-erdogan.html>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/10/ukraine-talks-turkey-russia-fail-progress-ceasefire>

<sup>26</sup> <https://warontherocks.com/2022/02/what-russias-new-reality-means-for-turkey/>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/27/turkey-calls-russia-invasion-of-ukraine-war-eyes-sea-movements>

but does allow ships to return to the Black Sea ports where they are registered, and it is thus more likely to interfere with the resupply of Russian troops in Syria than hamper the offensive in Ukraine.

With its economy in dire straits, independent of events in Ukraine, Turkey was forced to abandon policies which had led to its regional isolation. Mr Erdogan set aside his determined support for the Islamic Brotherhood in a well-publicised trip to the United Arab Emirates – where the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, was lit up in the Turkish colours<sup>28</sup> – where he won pledges of increased investment.<sup>28</sup> Not two years earlier Turkey had threatened to suspend diplomatic ties with Abu Dhabi over its recognition of Israel – an event which it “could not stomach.”<sup>29</sup> On 9 March 2022 the Turkish president welcomed his Israeli counterpart, Isaac Herzog, to Ankara on an official visit.<sup>30</sup> Shortly after he met with the Greek prime minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, leading to speculation of new cooperation in energy exploration in the Eastern Mediterranean. The cruel events in Ukraine and the dramatic weakening of Russia that has ensued, is yet another shifting sand which Turkey will take into account.

“For Erdoğan, the war in Ukraine is a good opportunity to prove to NATO and West that he is a good NATO follower. Although he doesn't say that loud enough in Turkish newspapers because he may lose some of his core Islamist, anti-Western voters,” Turkey's Nobel laureate novelist, Orhan Pamuk told *Der Spiegel*.<sup>31</sup>

Yet, truly to polish its credentials with its traditional allies, the Turkish government must be seen to improve radically its respect for human rights. Such an opportunity was missed when the courts again refused to release businessman-philanthropist Osman Kavala from pre-trial detention both in defiance of a ruling by the European Court of Human Rights<sup>32</sup> and in the face of subsequent sanctions by the Court's parent body, the Council of Europe.<sup>33</sup> More probably the government sees in the Ukraine conflict an opportunity to re-assert its strategic significance, create more wiggle room for its authoritarian practices and, by improving its international standing, impress its own electorate.

A final note on the pandemic: Turkey appears to be entering a period of relative normalisation from a spike in the last week of January that corresponded to school holidays. As of writing, the rate of infection dropped some 45% from the previous two weeks to stand at 47,000 cases. Daily fatalities now average 188, of which less than 10% have covid as the sole cause. Over 62% of over 18s have been double vaccinated. This genuine amelioration, combined with the

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/15/erdogans-uae-visit-affirms-shift-in-relations-help-for-turkeys-economy.html>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/14/iran-and-turkey-denounce-uae-over-deal-with-israel>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/israeli-president-welcomed-with-official-ceremony-in-turkish-capital/2529128>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.spiegel.de/international/nobel-laureate-orhan-pamuk-on-russia-s-war-of-aggression-a-24453054-3276-4709-a4a5-2d79dfb42cb4>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.expressioninterrupted.com/osman-kavala-remains-behind-bars-in-gezi-trial/>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/02/02/turkey-council-europe-votes-infringement-process>

approach of the tourism season, has led to a relaxation of containment measures with compulsory mask-wearing largely confined to mass transportation, schools, and cinemas – or poorly ventilated spaces. There is no longer a need to show an identifying HES code (Hayat Eve Sığar or “Life fits Home [stet]”) to enter public venues, and PCR tests are no longer required for domestic flights. International travellers who have been doubly vaccinated or who test negative on a PCR test within 72 hours of their flight are not required to quarantine.



## Turkish Economy Review:

### The New (Electoral) Economic Model

by

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(This review was completed as Russia invaded Ukraine, with major potential repercussions for Turkey. Below we highlight some of the key risks from this conflict leaving a more extensive coverage of its impact to *Review No 40* next Autumn)

### **Inflation, elections, and the moral critique of interest earnings**

The backdrop to the recent bout of Turkish macro-instability at the end of 2021 was the dismissal in March 2021 of Naci Ağbal -- after only five months in office as governor of the Central Bank of Turkey (CBT). As an experienced hand, he had raised interest rates to stabilise the currency, after more than \$100bn of the country's foreign currency reserves had been spent in futile interventions by the previous economics and Central Bank team led by Berat Albayrak. Mr Ağbal was replaced by Şahap Kavcıoğlu who supported the President's oft-repeated thesis that 'interest rate rises cause inflation'. This thesis is essentially an attempt to provide economic content to a political strategy. It elevates the importance of the impact of rising borrowing costs (from interest rate hikes) on inflation in what is called 'cost-push' or supply-side inflation in Economics-101 courses.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, with Central Bank foreign currency reserves at an all-time low, the currency is left to find its own 'competitive level'. Other inflationary cost factors such as the current rise in energy and imported input prices are dealt with by ad-hoc measures that have been coordinated by the Price Stability Committee since June 2021 – the latest of which is the cut in VAT rates on essential food items.

In contrast, orthodox anti-inflation policies rely on raising interest rates to curb money and credit growth to reduce domestic demand, thus limiting the scope for price-hikes. This also limits firms' ability to pass on cost increases and forces efficiencies to maintain profit margins. Although the orthodox approach can

<sup>34</sup> There is of course currently a huge debate among economists on the causes of inflation, which we can't go into here.



boost productivity, it is a socially harsh policy tool that also brings bankruptcies and higher unemployment. An added problem in an open emerging market like Turkey is the tendency of higher interest rates to attract portfolio capital inflows that appreciate the currency, boost imports, lower exports, and widen the current account deficit. Hence for the orthodox anti-inflation stance to work, capital controls to discourage short-term capital inflows and a tighter fiscal policy is also needed – all of which the AKP, facing declining electoral prospects, has been loath to adopt.

Instead, to maintain growth, the country has been presented with interest rate cuts, combined with macro-prudential measures and mostly ineffective ad-hoc administrative interventions -- wrapped up with AKP's moral critique of interest earnings. The previous 2018 and 2020 currency volatility resulting from this stance had been overcome with orthodox monetary policy U-turns that were soon abandoned.<sup>35</sup> The currency weakness from this on-off monetary tightening since 2017 and the loss of credibility of the Central Bank increased inflationary expectations such that, predictably, by December, there was a sharp public reaction to the cumulative 500 basis point reduction in the policy rate to 14% -- half the rate of inflation. The scramble by depositors to protect their Lira savings by converting them into foreign currency crashed the Lira to TL20/\$ taking the share of foreign exchange (FX) deposits to around 65%. In response, this time around, instead of an orthodox policy U-turn, the government has revived measures last seen in the 1970s-era prior to the liberalisation of finance and has introduced the New Economic Model.



### **Dollarisation of the deposit-base, echoes of the 1970s' Convertible Turkish Lira Deposits (CTLDs)**

With Central Bank interventions failing to stabilise the Lira by mid-December, new measures were rushed out that provided TL-deposits (of 3-months or longer) with insulation from currency depreciation (*Kur Korumali Mevduat* or KKM). In a bid to replenish CBT foreign exchange reserves (down \$10bn from the December interventions to \$110bn (including gold) by end-2021), exporters are obliged to sell 25% of FX revenues to the CBT. There were also punitive measures including the BDDK (Banking Sector Regulator) investigations on currency-related commentary in social media accounts; in February, Ministry of Finance inspectors were sent to all 81 provinces to control speculative stock hoarding and profiteering.

This mix of financial incentives and coercive measures has managed to stabilise the Lira for now. By the end of the year, the TL had stabilised to around TL13.60/US\$ where it remained in February – but this was still down around 49% on a year ago.<sup>36</sup> By early February, about \$10bn of FX-deposits had been

<sup>35</sup> See *Turkish Area Studies Review*, Autumn 2018 and 2021, Nos 32 and 38.

<sup>36</sup> Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine at the end of February, the Lira has weakened further to TL14/US\$.

converted to the new KKM instrument and additional tax incentives have been offered for the switch of corporate FX-deposits into the KKM (to be held in the Central Bank). A \$5bn swap agreement with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and discussions between the Turkish Wealth Fund and Abu Dhabi State Investment Fund for \$10bn of foreign direct investments in Turkish assets also helped support the currency.

However, contrary to the talk of ‘Lira-ization’ of the Turkish economy, these measures have effectively extended the dollarization of the Turkish deposit base. It also brings echoes of the 1970s. One of the triggers of the payments crisis of the late 1970s was a similar deposit instrument that had been originally set up for Turkish workers in Europe to repatriate their foreign currency savings: CTLDs (Convertible Turkish Lira Deposits). This seemed like a good idea until the mid-1970s oil price rises brought payments difficulties, Lira weakness and high inflation by the end of the decade.<sup>37</sup> Then, as now, there were sharp unexpected rises in energy prices and international interest rates with a government unwilling to adjust policy to changing global conditions.

### **The Central Bank marginalised; burden on fiscal accounts increased**

The new KKM has been described as a complex ‘interest rate equalisation mechanism’ with guarantees to maintain the real value of Lira deposits when measured in hard currency.<sup>38</sup> The aim is to try to insulate the wider economy from the contracting effects of higher interest rates as the AKP prepares for a general election. But despite the dramatic cuts in the policy rate (at which the CBT lends to the banking sector), commercial bank rates have all risen: consumer credit and small businesses face borrowing rates of up to 30%. Although these are still below inflation, the ensuing macro and policy instability is undermining long-term investments: the January 2022 purchasing managers index (PMI) for manufacturing showed new orders slowed for the fourth consecutive month since October when the new monetary stance came into effect.

This approach also brings added risks. The dollarization of the deposit base increases the role of the Ministry of Finance in defending the currency and marginalises the Central Bank. It exposes the fiscal accounts to a bigger financing burden as inflation accelerates and the currency depreciates – as happened with the CTLDs in the 1970s. In addition, today the government has other potential obligations in the FX-indexed guarantees associated with the many large infrastructure projects financed on Public-Private Participation (PPP) schemes. The latest Inflation Report from the CBT seems to accept that inflation would continue to rise in the first half of 2022, but (assuming the Lira

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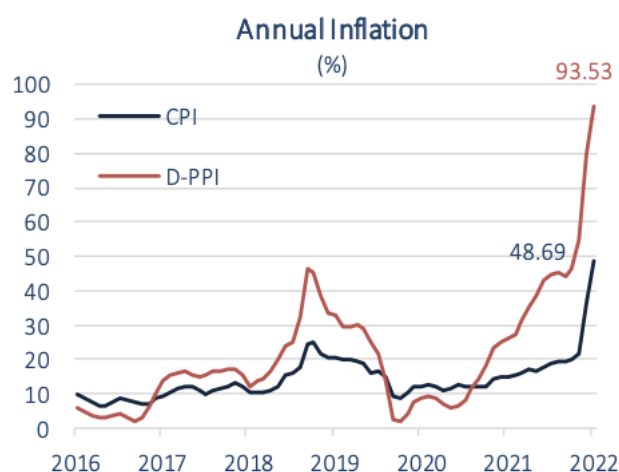
<sup>37</sup> The CTLDs grew rapidly in the second half of the 1970s and became an instrument of short-term borrowing by Turkish commercial banks in the European money markets. The Ecevit government froze them in 1978 to control the increase in short-term debt. See William Hale, *The Political and Economic Development of Modern Turkey*, Croom Helm, 1981, London, pp.241-42.

<sup>38</sup> M. El-Erian, ‘What to make of Turkey’s latest unorthodox currency move?’, *Financial Times*, 21 December 2021.



remains stable), as Covid-related supply factors ease and given base effects it would decline in the second half ending the year at 23%.<sup>39</sup>

Yet, the January consumer price inflation (CPI) is already at almost 50% over a year ago (see chart below) and looks likely to rise further. Even in the unlikely case of the currency remaining stable, still rippling through the economy is the impact of the 93.5% producer price inflation reflecting the depreciation of the Turkish Lira and Covid related supply-side factors such as the rise in energy and food prices and supply chain disruptions. There is also little sign of efforts to dampen demand-side inflation. In addition to continued support for Covid-related hardship, new measures have been added to compensate for inflation with rises in public sector wages and the minimum wage, and another three KGF (credit guarantee fund) support packages to business amounting to TL60bn, backed up with a \$3.8bn capital injection from the Turkish Wealth Fund into state banks to ensure continued credit growth.



Source:  
Türkiye İş Bankası,  
*Weekly Bulletin*,  
7 February 2022:  
Consumer Price Index (CPI)  
and  
Domestic Producer Price Index  
(D-PPI)

Moreover, pressures on the currency are also likely to remain. The 2021 current account deficit more than halved to \$14.9bn (from \$35.5bn in 2020) due to strong exports and a recovery in tourism.<sup>40</sup> But, this performance may not be repeated in 2022 with export growth facing capacity constraints, slower growth in major export markets, and reduction of tourist arrivals due to the ongoing Ukraine crisis. This combination of factors on the foreign payments could keep high the risks of a currency depreciation-inflation spiral. This, in turn, may require a belated sharp policy tightening to suppress domestic demand – which was what the current strategy was meant to avoid.

## The New Economy Model not new and Turkey not China

This risky mix of reactive measures has been elevated to a new growth model by attaching them to already existing work around an industrial strategy for Turkey. Various names as the New Economy Model or the Turkish Economy Model, it is not 'new', it is definitely uniquely Turkish, and delivering on its objectives will require a new political and institutional reset as well as more time.

<sup>39</sup> CBT, *Inflation Report*, 2022-1.

<sup>40</sup> There was also a sharp curtailment of gold imports and exports benefited from relocation of supply chains from Asia to Turkey in mostly textiles and clothing.

There are two related components to the New Model. The first is the weak currency and the reduction of import dependence; and the second is cutting the link between currency depreciation and inflation.

Its core aim to reduce the Turkish economy's import dependence and current account deficit draws on Industrial Policy initiatives since the global financial crisis. These included the 2010 Industrial Policy strategy paper aiming to reduce the import dependence of Turkish industry, followed by the Tech-driven Industry Initiative aiming to increase high-tech exports, recently expanded in 2021 with a 'Green Agenda' for the decarbonisation of Turkish industry. These policies have had some positive achievements, notably in the defence sector where domestic content has doubled to 70% and last year there was the development of a Covid vaccine by researchers at Erciyes University in Kayseri.

But progress has become uneven and faltered since 2016 due to the deterioration of the political and institutional framework. Industrial policies involve long-term investments requiring state subsidies which have been increasingly prone to corruption and patronage. Since 2017 the independence of the Central Bank has been eroded, resulting in increased macro-economic instability. The current policy-mix involving rapid changes in legislation around the KKM and numerous new ad-hoc measures have brought new risks, increasing policy uncertainty that further undermines long-term investment.<sup>41</sup> This highlights the problem of the *time-scale* of these objectives. The self-sufficiency achieved in the defence sector reflects efforts that began in the 1980s. Long-term investments aiming for a technological upgrade of Turkish industry have become more difficult under current conditions of macroeconomic instability: high-tech exports have been stuck at around 3% of total exports. These trends prompted a warning in the latest UNICEF *Science Report* that although Turkey had been catching up with advanced economies until around 2015, progress had slowed suggesting the country could be 'heading for a middle-of-the-road-innovator-trap'.<sup>42</sup>

The discussions around the new model also include talk of the 'end of the Washington Consensus' and the beginning of a 'Beijing Consensus'. The reference to the Chinese economy seems to be inspired by the weak Renminbi which is seen as the key to China's current account surplus. But these references ignore the unique features of the Chinese economy that have driven China's remarkable rise. These include vastly greater economies of scale than in Turkey, a cheap labour force trapped in the cities through the *hukou* system, a highly planned and controlled economy, including capital controls, and, in recent years, cutting-edge technological innovation. In addition, there is the vast difference between the high levels of Chinese national savings which Turkey cannot attain as long as Turkish savers are offered negative real interest rates that discourage savings. Hence more time, macro-stability and, as argued by Akat and Gürsel in the study reviewed on p 68 of this *Review*, an improvement

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<sup>41</sup> 'Tebliğler adeta "risk unsuru" oldu', interview with the economist, Ali Agaoğlu, *Dünya*, 11 February, 2022.

<sup>42</sup> UNICEF, *Science Report 2021*, p338.

in the political and institutional framework are all needed to bring about a lasting reduction in the import dependence of the Turkish economy.<sup>43</sup>

### **‘Sailing into uncharted waters’**

Without substantial economy-wide progress in reducing the import dependence of the Turkish economy, the first element of the New Economy Model, its second component, that is the disinflationary impetus from cutting the link between Lira depreciation and imported cost-pressures, also looks difficult. Hence, it is likely that as in the past, it will be the AKP’s electoral imperative to maintain growth that will drive the currency, inflation, and foreign payments. But these, in turn, remain exposed to global risk factors that are unusually high today. They range from the persistence of global inflation, high energy and food prices, and Covid-related supply-side factors, to the pace of monetary tightening by major central banks. These combinations of risks are amplified further by the Ukraine crisis – all of which are likely to reduce growth while also keeping inflation high – just what the new policy mix promised to avoid.

Meanwhile, the yields on 10-year benchmark government bonds hover between 20-25%. Although this is up from 16% in September 2021, it could have been worse were it not for a number of ongoing strengths of the Turkish economy that are also supporting the Lira for now.<sup>44</sup> These include the relatively strong banking sector, the decline in foreign currency debt of the corporate and banking sector over the past five years, and modest levels of public debt. These strengths have brought a relatively muted response by international investors, who have at any rate mostly reduced their exposure to Turkish assets.<sup>45</sup>

However, domestic investors and savers do remain exposed to this risky and eclectic policy mix. Bracing for a sustained period of high inflation, the Turkish public are buying property to maintain the value of their savings. In December, house sales had risen 113% on a year ago. In the absence of a miraculous transformation of Turkish industry rapidly responding to low interest rates and weak currency to reduce its import dependence, the current economic strategy can only be seen as an electoral package to gain time for the AKP and provide a platform for the upcoming election. The AKP’s problems reflect its waning public support after 20 years of rule and increased authoritarian measures to stay in power. Its eclectic policy mix to try to achieve a rapid increase in self-sufficiency, is also in response to the regional conflicts and the broader difficulties of middle-income economies to build resilience to the current global environment and transition to a new growth model.



<sup>43</sup> Asaf Savaş Akat, Seyfettin Gürsel (eds), *Turkish Economy at the Crossroads, Facing the Challenges Ahead*, World Scientific Publishing, 2021.

<sup>44</sup> ‘Why Turkey’s economic resilience has defied the worst fears’, *Financial Times*, 11 Feb 2022.

<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, Fitch downgraded Turkish sovereign debt to B+ (from BB-) which is four notches below investment grade in early February with a negative watch on the rating due to the possible further risks from the Ukraine crisis.

## Turkey's Military Campaigns against the PKK in Iraq and Syria.

Will they ever end?

**Kurdistan Workers' Party**  
Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê  
**(PKK)**

by Bill Park  
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This piece was being finalised against the distracting backdrop of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which raised – among other issues – the question of the extent to which political problems can be effectively addressed by military means. This question applies, at least as compellingly, to Ankara's approach to its 'Kurdish question', which is rooted in the fact that up to 25% of the country's population is ethnically Kurdish. Turkey's hostility to any manifestation of Kurdish identity politics dates back to the Republic's foundation and has incorporated the brutal suppression of tribal and other localised revolts, including the 1937 Dersim (or Tunceli) rebellion, multiple executions and incarcerations of Kurdish rebel leaders, the forced resettlement of Kurdish populations, place-name changes, and a constant military presence in the largely Kurdish southeast of the country. Throughout much of the Republic's history, linguistic, cultural, and political expressions of Kurdishness have been largely banned, up to the present day.

Although the current Kurdish political party, the People's Democratic Party (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi*, or HDP), founded in 2012, has not been banned – unlike all its predecessors – its national and local leaderships have been imprisoned or otherwise removed from office, and most of its affiliated bodies have been closed down. Indeed, any Kurdish political self-expression has been constrained since the introduction of 'democratisation' in the 1950s. The formation of the Kurdistan Workers Party (*Partiyê Karkerên Kurdistanê*, or PKK) in 1978, and its embarkation on a violent struggle against the Turkish state in the early 1980s, has represented a serious challenge to Turkey's political order, but Ankara's repression of Kurdish political activity long predates it. Nationalist opposition to expressions of Kurdish identity have been hard-wired into Turkish political life from the outset, rooted in the fear that Turkey's territorial integrity was vulnerable to separatism and to external meddling, and in Republican Turkey's determined nation-building project.

Only around half of the ethnic Kurds that straddle Turkey's borders with Iran, Iraq and Syria live in Turkey, ensuring that Turkey's domestic Kurdish struggles are bound to be complicated by wider regional considerations. Thus, in 1929, Turkish forces crossed into Iran in pursuit of Kurdish rebels, and today's Syrian Kurds are heavily descended from Kurds escaping Turkish repression in the 1920s and 1930s. More recently, during the 1980s the PKK began using Kurdish-populated northern Iraqi territory as a location where it could hide, train, and from which it could launch raids into Turkey. Ankara's discomfort with Kurdish aspirations to self-determination intensified further with the emergence of the semi-autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in northern Iraq in 1992, and its further entrenchment following the overthrow of Saddam

Hussein's Ba'athist regime in 2003. With the formal establishment in early 2014 of the Kurdish self-governing entity of Rojava, later renamed the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria, Turkey's Kurdish sensitivities were again aroused. Formed out of three non-contiguous territories spread along Turkey's southern border by the Democratic Union Party (*Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat*, or PYD), and its armed People's Protection Units (or *Yekineyen Parastina Gel*, or YPG) which Turkey rightly regarded as an offshoot of the PKK, Ankara's fears were heightened further by the support given by Washington and its allies to Syria's Kurdish forces in their joint struggle against Islamic State (IS) in Syria, a struggle to which Turkey's contribution has been found wanting by its NATO allies.

Ankara's response to Kurdish developments in northern Iraq and northern Syria has incorporated a significant military component. This raises a number of questions. These include whether Turkey's domestic Kurdish travails can be effectively addressed by a heavily 'securitised' and military response, both within and across its borders. Is military 'victory' achievable and, if so, what might it look like? Alternatively, what might be the diplomatic and political implications of any drawn-out Turkish military campaigns in Iraq and/or Syria? Of course, the scenarios in Iraq and Syria that Turkey is confronted by and contributes to have some important differences, so this piece will address each individually.

## Iraq

In the early 1980s, the PKK established training camps in northern Iraq. Saddam Hussein's regime was content to allow Turkish bombing and commando raids against these Kurdish bases. During the 1990s, Turkey also launched a series of large-scale ground interventions into Iraq. Except for a hiatus between the overthrow of the Ba'athist regime in Baghdad in 2003, with the establishment of a US presence in Iraq, and 2007, when President Bush again gave the green light to a resumption of the Turkish military campaign against PKK bases in northern Iraq, Turkish military activity has continued to this day. Turkey has established around thirty small military bases in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), within the area that since 1992 has been governed by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). In 2017, and largely in response to PYD gains in Syria, Ankara again intensified its military activity, not least in the largely Yazidi Kurdish Sinjar area, which PKK forces had taken a leading role in liberating from IS control. Indeed, Ankara's operations against the PKK in Iraq are now driven as much by developments in Syria as by circumstances inside Turkey, where fighting has waned. In May 2019 Turkey launched the still-ongoing *Operation Claw* incursion into northern Iraq, which represented a further intensification of military activity, which features an increasing reliance on drone technology and air power.<sup>46</sup> This campaign has seriously impacted on the PKK's capacity. Many of its leading figures have been killed, and its freedom of movement has been undermined. Even so, it retains

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<sup>46</sup> For an update, see Berkay Mandıracı, 'Turkey's PKK Conflict: A Regional Battleground in Flux', International Crisis Group, 18 February 2022, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkey/turkeys-pkk-conflict-regional-battleground-flux>



the capacity to mount attacks against Turkish units in northern Iraq and northern Syria, and to maintain its supply routes into Syria via Sinjar, which it controls.

Both Baghdad and Erbil have frequently protested against Turkey's actions, but 'Erbil' – which in this context essentially indicates the leadership of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), one of two parties that, in the most fragile of coalitions, dominates the KRG – has primarily held the PKK responsible due to its presence on KRG territory, which it resents. The other party is the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), regarded as both closer to Iran and more sympathetic to the PKK). The KDP leadership sees the PKK as an ideological and political threat as well a complication in its close economic and political relationship with Turkey. The leaderships of both Iraqi Kurdish parties are eye-wateringly corrupt, and recent months have seen fierce street protests and a rise in the number of Iraqi Kurds seeking to emigrate. The PKK certainly aspires to, and might yet become, more pan-Kurdish in its appeal.



Indeed, relations with the KRG themselves offer another example of Ankara's persisting preoccupation with the Kurdish question. Ankara initially refused to deal with Erbil formally.<sup>47</sup> However, western support for the KRG was now a reality that Turkey had to adjust to. Furthermore, Turkish businesses began dominating the KRG's economy, while Ankara's desire to limit its energy dependency on Russia and Iran, and its aspiration to develop as an energy 'hub,' led to the export of KRG oil from the Turkish port of Ceyhan, in the face of opposition from both Baghdad and Washington.<sup>48</sup> Ankara also appreciated the role Erbil could play in its struggle against the PKK.<sup>49</sup> The KDP has indeed cooperated in Turkey's pursuit of the PKK in northern Iraq, by providing intelligence, logistic support and even security to some of Turkey's bases in the region. Thus, from 2010 Ankara formalised its relationship with Erbil, hoping it could deal with a tribal, conservative albeit nationalist Kurdish leadership, representing a social force that modernity and state repression had largely banished from Turkey itself. Turkey's delicate stance was severely challenged by a Kurdish independence referendum held on 25 September 2017, which resulted in a resounding 'yes' vote. Ankara responded by angrily threatening

<sup>47</sup> Lundgren, A., *The Unwelcome Neighbour: Turkey's Kurdish Policy* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2007); Bill Park, *Turkey's Policy Towards Northern Iraq: Problems and Perspectives*; Adelphi Paper 374, International Institute for Strategic Studies, May 2005.

<sup>48</sup> Robin Mills, R., 'A Rocky Road: Kurdish Oil and Independence', *Iraq Energy Institute* 19 February 2018, <https://iraqenergy.org/rocky-road-kurdish-oil-and-independence>.

<sup>49</sup> Bill Park, 'Turkey-KRG relations after the US Withdrawal from Iraq: Putting the Kurds on the Map', *Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College*, March 2014.



Erbil,<sup>50</sup> and applauded when Iraqi government forces, backed by the Shia militias and Iran, took back all disputed territories from Kurdish control.

The establishment of an independent Iraqi Kurdistan now looked less likely, but Turkey's economic penetration of Iraqi Kurdistan remains considerable. Turkey's presence in Iraqi Kurdistan is now of long duration, and is rooted in economic, political and military interests. It is seen by Ankara as essential to the struggle against the PKK in both Turkey and Syria and enables Ankara to keep a watchful eye on Iraqi Kurdish aspirations. It reflects, too, Turkey's regional economic interests and its dependence on imported energy. Although it is hard to envisage circumstances in which Turkish forces will either be expelled or would withdraw voluntarily, Turkey's presence in northern Iraq does rely on the compliance or weakness of Erbil, Baghdad, Tehran, and Washington. Of these, Tehran's continued compliance is the most unpredictable. Iraqi Kurdistan is now an integral part of Turkey's 'near abroad', but it is hard to see how it can lead to any kind of 'solution' to Turkey's Kurdish woes.

## Syria

Turkey's stake in Syria predates the emergence of Rojava. Finding themselves at odds over their Cold War alignments, water resources, relations with Israel, and over Damascus's hosting of PKK training camps and PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, and against a background of Syria's simmering resentment of Turkey's acquisition of Hatay province from French Syria in 1939, Turkey-Syrian relations had long been in deep freeze. However, relations softened following a Turkish threat to use force in 1998 in order to compel Syria's expulsion of Öcalan. Damascus complied, and soon emerged as the centrepiece of Ankara's new region-friendly 'zero problems' foreign policy.<sup>51</sup> Yet Turkey converted almost overnight from being Bashar al-Assad's most assiduous courtier into his most determined adversary in the wake of his regime's harsh crackdown against Syria's 'Arab Spring' protestors in 2011. Ankara sponsored (Sunni) opposition to his (largely Alawite) rule, but Turkey's western allies soon became wary of Ankara's overly-close relationships with al-Qaeda affiliated and other radical *jihadi* groups that were fighting against the regime, and by its failure to shut down the so-called '*jihadi* highway' that brought Islamic radicals to Syria via Turkey. Ankara has indeed persisted in its sponsorship of often radically Islamic, and sometimes lawless and mercenary, groups in Syria, as instruments in its struggle to combat the gains made by Syria's Kurds.

Ankara failed to anticipate the emergence of the PKK-affiliated PYD as a key element in the Syrian conflict,<sup>52</sup> but the 2014 establishment of Rojava was seen

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<sup>50</sup> Bill Park, Joost Jongerden, Francis Owtram and Akiko Yoshioka, 'On the Independence Referendum in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and Disputed Territories', *Kurdish Studies*, 5(2), October 2017, pp.199-214'

<sup>51</sup> Meliha Benli Altunışık and Özlem Tür, 'From distant neighbours to partners? Changing Syrian-Turkish relations', *Security Dialogue*, 37(2), 2006, pp.229-248.

<sup>52</sup> 'Flight of Icarus? The PYD's Precarious Rise in Syria', *International Crisis Group*, Middle East Report no. 151, 8 May 2014, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/syria/flight-icarus-pyd-s-precarious-rise-syria>; Michael Gunter, *Out of Nowhere: The Kurds of Syria in Peace and War* (London: Hurst and Co, 2014).

in Ankara as tantamount to the establishment of PKK-controlled havens on its southern border.<sup>53</sup> When Islamic State (IS) forces embarked on a siege of the Syrian Kurdish border town of Kobane in 2014, Washington came to support the town's Kurdish defenders while Turkey stood by passively. Although they shared a hostility to Damascus, Washington was now more committed to the defeat of IS, while Ankara focused on opposing the PYD.

Russian and Iranian backing for the Assad regime added to Ankara's problems. However, Moscow gave the green light to Turkey's *Operation Euphrates Shield* incursion into Syria in September 2016, aiming at obstructing the linking-up of Rojava's cantons,<sup>54</sup> and to *Operation Olive Branch* in January 2018 against the Kurdish canton of Afrin.<sup>55</sup> Both operations incorporated Turkey-sponsored and anti-Assad Islamist elements, and that in Afrin in particular has led to ethnic cleansing of much of its Kurdish population, to lawlessness, and to conflict between the various *jihadi* and opportunistic groups that Turkey has sponsored there. Meanwhile, the YPG has since prosecuted an irregular campaign against the Turkish presence. Around Idlib, ceasefires that Turkey has negotiated with Moscow and Damascus remain fragile, not least owing to Turkey's inability or unwillingness to disarm, control or expel some of the rebel groups there. Turkey's engagement in Syria remains dependent on a fraught understanding with Russia that is vulnerable to the Damascus government's opposition to the Turkish presence on Syrian soil, to Moscow's dialogue with the PYD, and to their shared hostility to the Islamist groups Turkey has been aligned with.

In October 2019 Turkey and its so-called Syrian National Army (SNA) Islamist allies embarked on another operation, dubbed *Operation Spring Peace*, to clear (Kurdish) 'terrorists' from northern Syria. This produced a patchy 'safe zone' extending roughly 30 kilometres from Turkey's border. The zone is located to the west of the still Kurdish-controlled area centred on Qamishli, where a reduced US presence also remains. Under US pressure, the YPG was obliged to withdraw from Turkey's 'peace zone', although skirmishes between Turkey-backed forces and the YPG have continued. Around two hundred thousand people – mainly Kurds – have fled the region, heading either



<sup>53</sup> Sevil Erkuş, 'Erdoğan Vows to Prevent Kurdish State in Northern Syria, as Iran warns Turkey', *Hurriyet Daily News*, 27 June 2015, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/erdogan-vows-to-prevent-kurdish-state-in-northern-syria-as-iran-warns-turkey.aspx?pageID=238&nID=84630&NewsCatID=338>,

<sup>54</sup> Cengiz Çandar, 'Operation Euphrates Shield: A Post-Mortem', *Al Monitor*, 5 April 2017, [http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/04/turkey-post-mortem-in-syria.html?utm\\_source=Boomtrain&utm\\_medium=manual&utm\\_campaign=20170406&bt\\_e=e=uUVbVCsHX3BpTkikUz5rRueZ57bvbM/ikC8vws7hOsux48LUcOyF7omE+5QVd5q+&bt\\_ts=1491498185749](http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/04/turkey-post-mortem-in-syria.html?utm_source=Boomtrain&utm_medium=manual&utm_campaign=20170406&bt_e=e=uUVbVCsHX3BpTkikUz5rRueZ57bvbM/ikC8vws7hOsux48LUcOyF7omE+5QVd5q+&bt_ts=1491498185749).

<sup>55</sup> Can Kasapoğlu and Sinan Ülgen, 'Operation Olive Branch: A Political-Military Assessment', *The Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM)*, 30 January 2018, <https://edam.org.tr/en/operation-olive-branch-a-political-military-assessment>

southwards or towards Iraqi Kurdistan. For the time being at least, the continued US presence signals its commitment to the Syrian Defence Force (SDF), the Kurdish-led and US-sponsored force established in 2015 and serves to stymie Turkish movement. The continued YPG hold on Qamishli and the surrounding area would ensure fierce resistance to any Turkish assault there, and would incur the wrath of Washington.

So, what of the future of the Turkish presence in northern Syria? Turkish infrastructure investments, the extension of Turkish state and commercial institutions there, and the 'cleansing' of Kurdish inhabitants in Afrin, suggest that a long stay is envisaged.<sup>56</sup> Although Ankara shares with Damascus an opposition to any Syrian Kurdish self-determination, it is unlikely to entrust Damascus with the security of Turkey's southern borders. Moscow will seek to bring Ankara and Damascus together, but Syrian distrust of Turkish motives is considerable. Should an agreement nevertheless materialise, it would require Ankara to loosen its ties with rebel forces, who are reliant on Turkey for economic supplies, trade, arms, and much else. Turkey's betrayal would incur their wrath and risk a violent reaction. Washington looks unlikely to desert the Kurds entirely, in light of the continued IS threat in both Syria and Iraq. Turkey's aspiration to encourage the return of some of its Syrian refugees will stumble in the face of Syria's continued instability. Turkey looks set for a long stay. It will unsettle but not defeat the YPG, its policies and actions will continue to alienate its neighbours, allies and partners, but it will not put an end to Kurdish bids for self-determination.

## At home

Notwithstanding Ankara's repression, the HDP continues to ride high in Turkish opinion polls. Its well-attended December 2021 convention in Istanbul was passionately defiant. The campaign to release the party's leader, Selahattin Demirtaş, who has been detained without trial since late 2016, continues. The Kurdish issue remains alive and well at home and in both Iraq and Syria. Many of Turkey's Kurds are assimilated, but many others retain their distinctive identity. It is these ethnically-conscious segments of the population that keep the flame of national self-determination alive. Repression and marginalisation work only to intensify such sentiments – as indeed Putin is about to discover in Ukraine. Turkey's hard-wired nationalism has thus far rendered it incapable of grasping this simple truth.

The ramification of such observations is that Ankara will find itself continuously entangled in the affairs of its neighbours, and endlessly inclined to resort to

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<sup>56</sup> Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, 'In Syria, its either Reconciliation or Annexation', *The American Spectator*, 23 August 2018, <https://spectator.org/in-syria-its-either-reconciliation-or-annexation/>; Hay Eytan Cohen Yanarocak, 'The Cypriotisation of Northern Syria', *The Jerusalem Institute for Strategic Studies*, 20 June 2018; see also Bill Park, 'Turkey's Idlib Adventure; Will it end in tears?' <http://www.platformpj.org/turkeys-idlib-adventure-will-it-end-in-tears/> 3 December 2018; 'Yet Another Turkish Dive into Syria's Deep Waters?', <http://www.platformpj.org/yet-another-turkish-dive-into-syrias-deep-waters/> 14 December 2018; 'Afrin; Prototype for a Turkish Incursion east of the Euphrates?', <http://www.platformpj.org/afrin-prototype-for-a-turkish-incursion-east-of-the-euphrates/> 28 January 2019, all *Platform for Peace and Justice*.

military measures and authoritarian repression. The likelihood that neither Iraq nor Syria will acquire effective, legitimate centralised rule in the near future ensures that the Kurdish issue will continue to bedevil the region's fate. Turkey's involvement in the affairs of its neighbours looks more likely to risk tension with them, with their regional and extra-regional sponsors, and even with Turkey's western allies. Turkey's behaviour does and will continue to alienate others. Ankara might again embark on a Kurdish 'peace process' at home, although it would surely be met with scepticism. Over the past one hundred years, Turkey has instead opted for the path of repression. As a consequence it has doomed itself to endless conflict, militarisation, risk, alienation, and condemnation. The maintenance of a 'hard' security culture that such a path necessitates will have a deleterious impact on the evolution of democratisation and liberalism at home. And yet still the Kurdish issue will live on and probably thrive, at home and across Turkey's borders.

## A Two State Solution for Cyprus?

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The Cyprus conflict has a long history. If we are to associate it with Greek nationalism, we can trace its origins back to the early 19th century, to the London Conference of 1832, in which Greece's independence from the Ottoman Empire was recognised. There are even earlier records of rebellion and demands for unification with mainland Greece in the Ottoman annals. The British, immediately after taking over the administration of Cyprus in return for security guarantees against the increasingly assertive and expansive Russians in 1878, had also some first-hand experiences of rebellion, terrorism and political turmoil until they handed over most of the island's territory to the newly created Greek-Turkish consociational state in 1960.

But if we see the Cyprus conflict as a clash of two nationalisms, we can safely take late 1963 as the starting date. Greeks would probably contest this and link it with Turkey's intervention after the coup facilitated by the regime in Athens against the constitutional order and political independence of Cyprus in 1974. According to the official Greek depiction of the conflict's chronology, Cyprus should be celebrating its 48th anniversary living in limbo on 20 July this year. Neither side knows for sure what the future will bring.



What they so far know is that a formula to bring them together could not be found since the first round of negotiations between their political representatives in 1977 although appointees of the international community have also been heavily involved. Almost all the UN Secretary-Generals have named at least one Cyprus point person – some of them becoming household celebrities on both sides of the island. Most Cypriots over 30 years of age would remember the charming and cunning Alvaro de Soto, a former Peruvian diplomat, from the times of the Annan Plan between 1999 and 2004. Cypriots also remember from the same period the charismatic Lord Hannay (pictured) and several other third-party facilitators seeking a settlement. If Cypriots do not take much note of the current emissaries from Britain and the US, it is because they have lost their appetite for a federal solution. Some still believe in the necessity of a bi-communal, bi-zonal formula but their numbers and influence are declining. There is no detectable enthusiasm on either side of the island. Those who still advocate a federal solution do so for the sake of political expedience and mostly out of habit or ideological conviction. As occasional opinion polls show, a 'solution' may still be desirable, yet it is usually seen as unattainable. The prevailing mood is either to immerse the Turkish Cypriots into the existing structures or to seek a two-state solution. Since the rejection of the Annan Plan on 24 April 2004 in the separate referenda conducted in the Greek side of the island, all attempts to obtain a settlement and to build confidence have also failed.



Despite some minor successes such as gate openings, finding the remains of missing persons, and the reparation of historical monuments, Cypriots were unable to record any noticeable progress on substantial issues like the status of Varosha/Maraş or the Magusa harbour. Confidence-building became as perplexing as the settlement itself. Moreover, the impact of those failed attempts on the overall settlement have been far from positive. They are usually seen as a vindication of the other side's intransigence or as a substitute solution which undermines the other side's interests. Greek Cypriots' main concern has usually been about losing their leverage by granting 'concessions' through confidence building. Turkish Cypriots, on the other hand, considered most of these issues as their bargaining chips for any future final settlement.

Since the resumption of talks in 1977, the only tangible progress has been on the naming of a potential solution. The two sides and the international community agreed to find a solution on the basis of bi-zonality and bi-communality. Attempts to deviate from this goal are sanctioned by the UN Security Council as we saw after the declaration of conditional independence by the Turkish Cypriots in 1983 while they still hoped for a potential federal solution. UN Security Council Resolution 541 condemned the declaration while Resolution 550 called on other countries not to recognize the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Yet it seems that no solution will be found in the foreseeable future as there is no will and incentive for it.

The best opportunity for a settlement was lost in 2004. After two major attempts, remembered as Cuellar's Initiative (1985) and the Ghali Set of Ideas (1988), the UN's seventh Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, as he later stated in his report



to the Security Council on Greek-Turkish rapprochement, believed that the European Council's 1999 Helsinki decision endorsing Turkey's candidacy for EU accession and the upcoming enlargement of the European Union with the inclusion of Cyprus presented a window of opportunity. Annan met with the leaders of both Cypriot communities and drew up five different versions of the plan named after him.

The fifth version, with 131 laws and 1,134 treaties exceeded 9000 pages and addressed all the outstanding issues such as governance, property, residence, territorial adjustments, citizenship and security. It might not have been a perfect plan, but it was certainly an optimum compromise for bi-communal, bi-zonal federal state with maximum security and prosperity. Yet, the plan failed - 75.8 % of the Greek Cypriots rejected it while 64.9 % of the Turkish Cypriots endorsed it. Pundits pointed to reasons for the failure ranging from the EU's incapacity to the dramatic televised speech by Greek Cypriot President Tassos Papadopoulos on 7 April 2004.

Papadopoulos in his letter to UN Secretary General Annan on 7 June 2004 stated his concerns about the Annan Plan,<sup>57</sup> including questions about its workability, the issue of Turkish settlers from the mainland, guarantor powers' rights emanating from the Treaty of Guarantee, the continued Turkish military presence, the lack of guarantees for the full implementation of the plan, as well as the long transitional period for any territorial adjustment. But whatever the reason, the plan failed and despite many rounds of negotiations since then between the political leaders of the two communities no document approaching the scale of the Annan Plan has since been produced.

The same issues were renegotiated in endless and futile meetings in New York, Geneva, Nicosia and elsewhere. Neither the two most pro-settlement Presidents and community leaders from the Turkish side nor the UN's two Secretary-Generals succeeding Kofi Annan were able to encourage the Greek Cypriot political leadership to compromise. The June 2017 Crans-Montana meeting in many ways became a turning point for the Turkish Cypriots and Turkey because, after that meeting, they began to talk about the necessity of a two-state solution. After the presidential election on the Turkish side of the island in October 2020, the new TRNC President Ersin Tatar officially adopted the two-state solution as his negotiation strategy.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, on the other hand, 47 years after the launch of the peacekeeping operation in Cyprus, was still deploring, in his report to the Security Council on 31 December 2021, that the only significant progress following the informal five-plus-one meeting held in Geneva from 27 to 29 April 2021 was consultations with the parties and explorations on whether a 'common ground could be found to lay a path towards formal negotiations'.<sup>58</sup> To his obvious dismay, the informal lunch held on 27 September in New York failed and 'the parties' positions remained far apart' while the two leaders

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<sup>57</sup> Akgün, M., Gürel, A., Hatay, M., Tiryaki, S., (2005) 'Quo Vadis Cyprus? A Tesev Working Paper'.

[https://www.tesev.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/rapor\\_Quo\\_Vadis\\_Cyprus\\_Kibris\\_Nereye.pdf](https://www.tesev.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/rapor_Quo_Vadis_Cyprus_Kibris_Nereye.pdf).

<sup>58</sup> Report of the Secretary-General. (2021). United Nations operation in Cyprus (S/2021/1110). [https://uncyprustalks.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/s\\_2021\\_1110\\_e.pdf](https://uncyprustalks.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/s_2021_1110_e.pdf)

indicated their interest in continued engagement but without tangible progress even on the confidence-building front.

Irrespective of the political preferences of Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots, the time might have come to heed the advice given by the International Crisis Group (ICG) in 2014. The two sides should indeed consider 'the option of mutually agreed independence for the Turkish Cypriots within the EU. To win that voluntary agreement, Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots would have to offer much: to return long-occupied territory like the ghost beach resort near Famagusta; pull back all or almost all of Turkey's occupation troops; give up the international guarantees that accompanied the island's independence in 1960; offer guaranteed compensation within an overall deal on property that both sides still own in each other's territory' – and probably much more.<sup>59</sup>

As the ICG report emphasized, 'the existing Republic of Cyprus and a new Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' side by side in the EU might provide much of what Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots actually want. There would be no federal government with cumbersome ethnic quotas that might anyway be struck down by the European Court of Human Rights. The prickly issue of the two thirds of north Cypriot properties owned by Greek Cypriots would become clearer and easier to resolve. If independent, the Turkish Cypriot entity would probably be willing to place its own limits on new Turkish "settlers" from the mainland. Turkey and Turkish Cypriots would likely have a defence arrangement, as is possible within the EU. And, with a Cyprus settlement, the path of Turkey's own EU accession process would be open again'.<sup>60</sup>

We should keep in mind that, since the drafting of this ICG report, the situation has become more complicated with the potential for more crises. This is because the UN peacekeeping mandate does not cover the matter of the contested waters of the island which has become more of an issue in recent years. Competition and rivalry between NATO members Greece and Turkey in the Mediterranean have intensified, with France also becoming more assertive in the region. And Turkey's increasing presence in the wider Middle East, particularly in Libya, led to its making a claim over an important part of the Mediterranean seabed.

The Cyprus problem is in urgent need of settlement. With heightened global tensions because of Russian involvement in Ukraine, NATO should overcome its internal differences to be better prepared to deter Russia. Greece and Turkey should certainly be encouraged to overcome their differences over Cyprus. But this will only be possible through unconventional means as the conventional route to a possible settlement was apparently exhausted as early as 2004...

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<sup>59</sup> International Crisis Group. (2014). Divided Cyprus: Coming to Terms on an Imperfect Reality (Europe Report N°229). <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/divided-cyprus-coming-to-terms-on-an-imperfect-reality.pdf>.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

## BATAS WEBINAR

### Intercultural Encounters among the Millets in the Late Ottoman Empire

1 October 2021

17.30 – 19.00

By zoom

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### Intercommunal Encounters Between Ottoman Turkish and Armenian Literati: The Case of Armeno-Turkish Print Media

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Ottoman/Turkish historiographies focusing on the relationship among Ottoman *millet*s tend to examine the subject in a binary way: Ottoman millets either lived in pure harmony or were completely segregated.<sup>61</sup> However, neither perspective is accurate. Evidence gathered from Armeno-Turkish print media of the Tanzimat era (1839-1876) hints at a broader sense of community. This article looks at the intercommunal relations between the Turkish and Armenian literati enabled by the Armeno-Turkish press by focusing on two Armeno-Turkish newspapers, *Manzume-i Efkâr* and *Varaka-i Havadis*. It also briefly describes the use of Armeno-Turkish and provides accounts of the nineteenth century Turkish authors on Armeno-Turkish written works.

### The Use of the Armeno-Turkish Medium

Writing Turkish with different scripts was a common practice during the nineteenth and early twentieth century Ottoman Empire. Of these writing systems, writing Turkish with Armenian letters – known as Armeno-Turkish – emerged as one of the more popular compound mediums. It was first used in manuscript format in the fourteenth century to write epics, poems, and short

<sup>61</sup> Cankara argues that the Ottoman historiography focused on the 'millet' question to understand cultural contacts among millets by either examining millets as compartmentalised Ottoman communities living disconnected from each other, or by romanticising the 'millet system' through overused notions to suggest how harmoniously the millets lived together. See, Cankara, M., 'Rethinking Ottoman Cross-cultural Encounters: Turks and the Armenian Alphabet', *Middle Eastern Studies* 51, no. 1 (2015), pp. 1-16.

stories.<sup>62</sup> The use of Armeno-Turkish widened during the eighteenth century when books on religion and philosophy were published in print format. Armeno-Turkish use reached its peak during the nineteenth century when numerous newspapers and periodicals, books with secular themes such as science, literature, linguistics, and various novel translations from European languages were published in the medium.<sup>63</sup>

The reasons behind the increased use of Armeno-Turkish during the nineteenth century were closely linked with the socio-political improvements enabled by the Tanzimat reforms. These reforms transformed public education. They allowed mixed schools where Muslims and non-Muslims could study together, increased the literacy level among the populaces, and prepared the ground for rapid growth in printing and publishing across the Empire. Ottoman Armenians, in particular, benefitted from the reform, gaining the right to have an administrative legal code – known as the Armenian Constitution of 1863 – which enabled a more liberal, secular, and democratic administration for the Ottoman Armenian community.

Most Ottoman Armenians were monolingual Turkish-speakers but they could not read and write in Turkish.<sup>64</sup> However, they had some basic Armenian reading skills from their church education.<sup>65</sup> The problems in standardising the written and spoken Armenian language, and difficulties in learning Ottoman Turkish were among the obstacles preventing the Armenians from being literate both in Turkish and Armenian.<sup>66</sup> For the publishers merging a well-known language, Turkish, with a familiar alphabet, Armenian, was a pragmatic solution to reach a wider audience. For this reason, Armeno-Turkish was already in wide use among the Protestant and Catholic missionaries during the eighteenth century onwards. By the mid-nineteenth century, Armeno-Turkish had been adopted by liberal, well-educated young Armenians as well and this group actively began writing books with secular themes and published dozens of magazines and newspapers.

But was such a popular medium, Armeno-Turkish, only an Armenian phenomenon, or were there Turks who could read Armeno-Turkish and follow the publications written in it? Although the Ottoman/Turkish press historiography has mostly suggested that Armenian press was an isolated media solely addressing Ottoman Armenians, was Armeno-Turkish a more inclusive media that was followed by the Ottoman Turks?

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<sup>62</sup> Koptaş, R. 'Ermeni Harfleriyle Türkçe', *Tarih ve Toplum* 230 (2003).

<sup>63</sup> For the full lists of Armeno-Turkish publications see; Step'anyan, H. A., *Ermeni harfli Türkçe kitaplar ve süreklî yayınlar bibliyografyası 1727-1968: Bibliographie des livres et de la presse arméno-turque 1727-1968*. (Turkuaz Yayınları, 2005).

<sup>64</sup> Ueno, M., 'One Script, Two Languages: Garabed Panosian and his Armeno-Turkish Newspapers in the Nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire', *Middle Eastern Studies* 52, no. 4 (2016), pp.605-622.

<sup>65</sup> Aslanian, S. D., 'Prepared in the Language of the Hagarites: Abbot Mkhitar's 1727 Armeno-Turkish Grammar of Modern Western', *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 25 (2016), pp.54-86.

<sup>66</sup> Davison, R. H., *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*. Vol. 2325. (Princeton University Press, 2015).

## Armeno-Turkish: “an effective meeting place for the Armenians and Turks”

Evidence suggests that Armeno-Turkish was not just an Armenian phenomenon. There were educated Turks who also wanted to learn the Armenian letters to be able to follow Armeno-Turkish publications. For example, there were manuals and pamphlets published to instruct Turks on the Armenian



alphabet. The manual, *Miftah-ı kıraat-ı huruf-ı ermeniye fi lisan-ı osmani* (Key to Reading Armenian Letters in the Ottoman Language) was among several books teaching how to read the Armenian script. The preface of the book stated that the author had penned

it at the request of several Ottoman nobles who had wanted to learn the Armenian alphabet and benefit from it in everyday life.<sup>67</sup> *Osmanlıca Bilenlere Dört Günde Ermenice Okumanın Usulü* (The Method of Reading Armenian in Four Days for those who Speak Ottoman Turkish) was another pamphlet, printed in the second half of the nineteenth century, which claimed its readers would be able to understand Armenian letters in a couple of days and read Armeno-Turkish newspapers, illustrated weekly periodicals and novels shortly after.<sup>68</sup> This shows that there was a demand in society at the time to learn the Armenian alphabet. Besides these manuals, the writings of some of the most prominent Turkish intellectuals in that period, such as Ali Suavi, Namık Kemal, Ahmed Mithat Efendi, and Ahmet İhsan, indicated that they were all familiar with the Armenian alphabet and some of their works clearly suggested that they were following Armeno-Turkish publications, and even contributed to them. For example, Ahmet İhsan Tokgöz, who described Armeno-Turkish as an effective “meeting place” for Armenians and Turks in his memoir, stated that before he had mastered French, he had held on to the novels and newspapers published in Turkish in Armenian script in Istanbul, since he learned how to read Armenian script from one of his classmates in a few days.<sup>69</sup> He also added that during the 1880s he wrote articles for the Armeno-Turkish newspaper *Cihan*. Ali Suavi stated in his newspaper *Muhbir* that: “Nowadays, those who know French or those who at least read the Armenian script learn about the state affairs and the nation! Those who know only Turkish cannot know about these”.<sup>70</sup> As indicated by the statements of these Turkish journalists/authors, Armeno-Turkish was not only an Armenian phenomenon and the publications in this mixed medium were popular among the Turkish literati of the nineteenth century.

<sup>67</sup> Karamadtiosian, A., *Miftah-ı kıraat-ı huruf-ı ermeniye fi lisan-ı osmani* (Istanbul, No Date).

<sup>68</sup> Muhtar, H.B.Z.A., *Osmanlıca bilenlere dört günde ermenice okumanın usulü* (Nişan Berberyan Matbaası, 1890).

<sup>69</sup> Kabacalı, A., (ed.) *Ahmet İhsan Tokgöz, Matbuat hatıralarım (1888-1914)* (İletişim Yayıncılık, 1993).

<sup>70</sup> Suavi, A., *Muhbir*, no.28, 4 March 1867 (27 Shawwal 1283).



## Armeno-Turkish print media of the Tanzimat era

Understandably, there were channels for intercommunal encounters among the literati of Ottoman Turks and Armenians. Among them were the bureaucratic posts, scientific societies and press enterprises. For example, *Mecmua-i Fünun*, a well-known Turkish science magazine published by the Ottoman Science Society in the nineteenth century, printed one of its issues in Armeno-Turkish only.<sup>71</sup> The issue was edited by Hovhannes Pasha who sat on the editorial board of the periodical. Hovhannes Pasha was also a member of the Ottoman Science Society and worked for the state's translation bureau (Bab-ı Ali Tercüme Odası). Publishing one of the issues of this popular Turkish magazine in Armeno-Turkish was quite normal for the time and it is likely many of the readers were familiar with the Armenian script.

The Armeno-Turkish press of the Tanzimat era was a significant channel that brought educated Armenians and Turks together. For example, an examination of *Manzume-i Efkâr* and *Varaka-i Havadis* reveals that those newspapers often included conveyed news items and articles from Ottoman Turkish newspapers such as *Ceride-i Havadis*, *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, *Basiret* and *Hadika*.<sup>72</sup> Turkish and Armenian journalists expressed their agreements or disagreements on social and political subjects and responded to each other's media through their articles. The editors of *Manzume-i Efkâr* and *Varaka-i Havadis* often published articles pointing out the problems about the education system in both Armenian and Turkish schools and appealed to the state for the necessary improvements. For instance, *Manzume-i Efkâr* provided an editorial letter from a Turkish newspaper, *Basiret*, which read as follows:

The province of Çatalca has two hundred Muslim and three hundred Christian households. There is a school in this town, but no child can learn how to read and write there. The problem is the failure of the school administration. While the teachers working in the Christian school of the town earn 800 qurushes, the salary of the teachers at the Muslim school is below 80 qurushes. Could the teacher who earns so little money remain willing to teach or do something?<sup>73</sup>

The editor of *Manzume-i Efkâr* was not indifferent to the situation of the Muslim schools. At the end of the letter, he commented that *Manzume-i Efkâr* will always in its news draw attention to the need to improve the educational system in the empire.

However, the news items on the educational matters did not only include problems. The Armeno-Turkish newspapers also provided news on the newly established or improved Armenian schools and the state's approach to those institutions. In an article published in *Manzume-i Efkâr*, Mehmed Pasha, the governor of the Beyoğlu district in Istanbul, was praised for his kind and

<sup>71</sup> Z. Mildanoğlu, *Ermenice süreli yayınlar 1794-2000* (Aras Yayıncılık, 2014).

<sup>72</sup> For the examples see; *Varaka-i Havadis*, No: 29, 5 September 1863; *Varaka-i Havadis*, No: 84, 2 May 1864; *Manzume-i Efkâr*, No: 2067.

<sup>73</sup> 'A Letter from Çatalca', *Manzume-i Efkâr*, no: 2067, 8 January 1873, p.2.

encouraging visit to a new Armenian boarding school in Beyoğlu.<sup>74</sup> The article, which revealed the close interaction between the state and the Armenian schools, stated that:

...His Excellency Governor Mehemmed Pasha gave a visit to our school and his highly valued and encouraging attitude towards the students and teachers was admiring. His excellency gave a speech at the school and stated that; “My precious children! We have always needed European teachers to teach science to our children. Hopefully, very soon, we will see that you complete your education here and become the preferred scholars to European teachers. We will be so proud to see you well-educated and serving your homeland.”<sup>75</sup>

The article also stated that the governor was very genuine, and he uttered these words in such a sincere tone like a father would advise his own son. Obviously, the statesmen followed the improvements in the educational institutions regardless of the community they belonged to. The governor was proud to see that these students would be the potential future teachers to replace the European instructors and assist the improvement of the Empire.

An announcement about a painting exhibition featuring works by a Muslim Turkish teacher, Ahmed Effendi, is another example of the intercommunal encounters between Ottoman Turks and Armenians. Ahmed Effendi’s art works were highly praised in the news and the editorial note stated that:

We take this exhibition very seriously as we believe that teaching art at schools is very beneficial for the advancement of art in our Empire. In Europe, particularly in England and France, various art schools for boys, nowadays even for girls, were established. These schools receive great support from both the state and the populace. We write all this here as we believe that art classes should be widespread in our country as well, and the government even should make it a compulsory in school curriculums. We hope that Ahmed Effendi’s art exhibition will attract the attention of some statesmen and that they will participate.<sup>76</sup>

As can be seen, *Manzume-i Efkâr* emphasised the significance of art. Not limiting it to a call to the Armenian community, the newspaper also appealed to the state to make art a compulsory course in schools.

In the Armeno-Turkish newspapers it was also common to see articles promoting newly published Turkish periodicals. For example, *Varaka-i Havadis* stated that *Mecmua-i İber-i İntibah* (*Journal for Instruction in Life Acumen*), a monthly journal in Ottoman Turkish, had just been published. The article detailed that “the twelve-page journal is adorned with beautiful pictures and includes informative articles on science and history”.<sup>77</sup> The article providing the

<sup>74</sup> ‘Pride and Gratitude’, *Manzume-i Efkâr*, no: 2097 (Evening edition), 27 January 1873, p.2.

<sup>75</sup> ‘*Manzume-i Efkâr*’, no: 2097, p.2.

<sup>76</sup> ‘Art Exhibition’, *Manzume-i Efkâr*, no: 2099, 7 February 1873, p.4

<sup>77</sup> *Varaka-i Havadis*, no: 84, 2 May 1864, p.2.

subscription fee and the addresses of the agencies selling the magazine added an editorial comment at the end and stated that:

Turkish has been taught in our schools for years, but most of the students cannot even write their names in Turkish. The language still sounds as hard as Chinese to the students. The Arabic book that has been taught in our schools is no use to anyone. We believe that if our state intends to abide by the reforms that it promises and do something for our benefit, then in our schools, proper Turkish lessons must be taught besides Armenian. To achieve this what we need is an *Elif Ba* manual (Ottoman-Arabic alphabet) and a basic Ottoman Turkish grammar book. After providing basic grammar education, students should be given Ottoman Turkish magazines like *Mecmua-i İber-i İntibah* to practice reading, and then be asked to write and translate. With this method, it is possible to read and write Turkish in two years.<sup>78</sup>

The quote above again showed how closely Turkish and Armenian journalists followed each other's periodicals. For the Armeno-Turkish *Varaka-i Havadis*, well-written Turkish journals like *Mecmua-i İber-i İntibah* would make beneficial teaching materials for Armenian children learning Turkish.

However, the relationship between the Turkish and Armenian journalists was not always courteous and mutual. There were often spats between the newspapers on some social and political subjects. For example, an issue about cemeteries between the state and the Armenian community was covered by *Manzume-i Efkâr*. The newspaper, which was owned by an Apostolic Armenian, Garabed Panosian, closely followed the issue and informed the public on every detail about it for a couple of months. Since the Apostolic Armenian community refused to hand their cemetery to the Beyoğlu municipality for it to be converted into a public park, they were harshly criticised by various groups including Catholic and Protestant Armenians, Orthodox Greeks, Turks, and Christian Europeans living in Istanbul. Those who criticised the Apostolic Armenian community subsequently published articles in their print media. Among them the Ottoman Turkish newspaper, *Hadika*, was very harsh. *Manzume-i Efkâr* published an article in response to *Hadika's* criticism and stated that:

*Hadika* published an article on our cemetery at Beyoğlu. The article is criticising us for not giving up on our cemetery and let the municipality convert it into a public park. *Hadika* is openly accusing us to be selfish for not giving up on our land. It also compares us with the Muslims who gave a large part of their cemetery in Taksim to the municipality without creating any problem for the construction of a new road. The language and style used by *Hadika* is a clear indication that the newspaper condemns us for not obeying the order. However, we won't even respond to those groundless claims! Everybody knows that as a community, we have always obeyed the law and fulfilled our duty to our state and society.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>78</sup> *Varaka-i Havadis*, no: 84, p.2.

<sup>79</sup> *Manzume-i Efkâr*, no:2068, 28 December 1872, p.2.

Later editions of *Manzume-i Efkâr* suggested that the cemetery subject generated numerous spats between *Hadika* and *Manzume-i Efkâr* and the tone of the language became harsher.<sup>80</sup> However, the issue was eventually resolved in the favour of the Apostolic Armenians since the Sultan confirmed that the land belonged to the Armenians and the state could not seize it.

The Armeno-Turkish print media of the Tanzimat era provided numerous examples which revealed intercommunal relations between educated Armenians and Turks. The Armeno-Turkish medium served as a channel where the educated Ottoman Turks and Armenians could interact. The literati of the two millets were not disconnected as they followed each other's publications. However, this connectedness did not mean that they always shared the same point of view on social and political subjects.



## **Greek-Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Nineteenth-Century Cappadocia. Shared Worship Places and Ritual Practices**

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Cappadocia is a region well-known for its natural landscapes, its unique Byzantine rock churches, and its underground settlements. International tourism is concentrated around the region of Ürgüp and Göreme, but "Greater Cappadocia" extends from west to east, from Aksaray to Kayseri, and from north to south, from the shores of the Kızılırmak river to the Taurus Mountain range. From the mid-twentieth century, tourism in Cappadocia has concentrated around the prestigious Byzantine sites. But Ottoman Cappadocia and its multicultural and multi-religious population deserves attention.

In the nineteenth century, Cappadocia was populated by a Muslim majority, but Christian communities were important minorities: the Armenians in the eastern part and by Orthodox Christians *Rum* who lived in the main towns of the region but also in many villages. Towns were generally populated by Rums, Armenians and Muslims (as well as by small communities of Protestants and Catholics) living in more or less distinct districts. Many villages were also shared by different communities, usually by Rums and Muslims or Armenians and Muslims. Almost no villages were shared by Rums and Armenians. As a result, except in towns, Rums and Armenians had few interactions, while these groups

<sup>80</sup> See, *Manzume-i Efkâr* no: 2069, p.3, 29 December 1872; *Manzume-i Efkâr* no: 2071, 30 December 1872, p.3.

frequently interacted with Muslims on the street, in the marketplace, in the coffeehouses, in the fields and even in their homes and in sacred spaces.

This paper analyses everyday relations and interactions of Rums and Muslims around shared sacred spaces and shared rituals. Most of the Rums of Cappadocia were the so-called Karamanlis, namely Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christians, who often did not know Greek since their mother tongue was the Turkish language that they wrote with Greek letters.<sup>81</sup> There were also several villages where the Rums spoke local Greek dialects. Interestingly, most mixed settlements shared between Rums and Muslims were inhabited by Karamanlis, while homogeneous Rum villages were more often the places inhabited by Greek-speaking communities, languages being obviously one of the primary conditions for interactions. As such, shared sacred places and rituals were more commonly visited and practiced by populations of villages where Turkish was the common language.

Studying shared ritual practices, various documents have been investigated, including narratives of Western travellers and missionaries, Rum parishes and communities' codices, Karamanlidika printings (i.e. books and press published in Karamanli-Turkish), as well as testimonies of Cappadocian Rums who left Turkey in 1923-1924 with the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey decided during the conference of Lausanne in 1923. These testimonies are part of the Oral Tradition Archives created by the Center for Asia Minor Studies (Athens) in the 1930s-1970s. This variety of sources gives important and complementary pieces of information to investigate shared ritual practices from an historical and anthropological perspective.

## Historical background

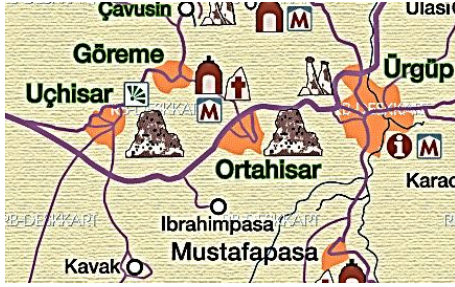
With the independence of the Kingdom of Greece, officially recognized in 1832 and, from 1839, the Ottoman social and economic reforms launched as parts of the Tanzimat era, Rums of Cappadocia began to emigrate in large numbers in search of work in the main urban centers around the Mediterranean and the Black Seas. They even migrated to Europe and America. But Istanbul attracted the greatest number. As a result of this migration, the number of Christians living in the region decreased drastically, to the point that some communities disappeared. On the other hand, thanks to the money earned by migrants organized into corporations or associations of compatriots, investments were made in the villages and towns in Cappadocia. Huge houses were built, as well as schools and churches but also libraries, hammams and other public buildings.

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<sup>81</sup>Cappadocia was, next to Istanbul, the main place of settlement of the Karamanlis, although communities were also established in other parts of Asia Minor (near Fethiye, Antalya, Ayvalık or Uşak).



Despite their demographic decline, the Rums of Cappadocia started a cultural renewal in their homeland. Some villages such as Sinasos (today's Mustafapasa) and Gelveri (Güzelyurt) became the flagships of Cappadocian Rum culture. Sinasos was a Greek-speaking Rum village with a very small Muslim minority which became the capital of Hellenism in central Anatolia, while Gelveri became a cultural capital for the Karamanlis.



Educated migrants living in Istanbul, Izmir, and other large cities were important intermediaries between the cultures and ideas developed in these urban centers and in the Cappadocian villages. Thanks to them, Greek and Karamanlidika publications – books, newspapers, or magazines – were disseminated throughout Anatolia. Hence new ideas, cultures, and even ideological and political views entered Cappadocia.



Moreover, the emigration movement led to increased economic and social ties between Rums and Muslims remaining in the villages. The Rum communities began to employ Muslim villagers to work on their land or in their houses, or to protect them and their properties and livestock. This was because only Christian women and, old people, and children still lived in the village over the whole year.

In terms of ideologies, in books and newspapers two opposing theses about the origins of "Karamanlis" developed. Some believed that Karamanlis were ethnically Rums and thought that they had to learn and speak Greek as well as Turkish. Thus Karamanlidika printings had a role in the education and enlightenment of the "Anatolian brothers", (*Anadolulu karındaşlarımız*) as authors regularly called them. In opposition to this Hellenization movement led from Istanbul and later from Athens (in the early 1920s), part of the Karamanlis led by a priest born in Kayseri who took later the name of Papa Eftim, claimed the Turkishness of the Karamanlis. In 1922, in the context of the Greek-Turkish conflict, Eftim founded the Turkish Orthodox Patriarchate of Istanbul and proclaimed its independence in front of the Greek Patriarchate. For this group, Karamanlidika printings were also a tool for education but without any Hellenization goal.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Foti Benlisoy and Stefo Benlisoy, *Türk Milliyetçiliğinde Katedilmemiş Bir Yol: 'Hıristiyan Türkler' ve Papa Eftim* (Istanbul: Istos, 2016). Foti Benlisoy and Stefo Benlisoy, 'Reading the Identity of "Karamanli" Through the Pages of Anatol', in *Cries and Whispers in Karamanlidika Books*, ed. M. Kappler and E. Balta, *Turcologica* 83 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), 93–108; Ayça Baydar, 'Anadolu'da Ortodoksluk Sadası', in *Cultural Encounters in the Turkish-Speaking Communities of the Late Ottoman Empire*, ed. E. Balta and M. Ölmez (Istanbul: Isis, 2014), 335–58; Evangelia and Mehmet Ölmez (dir.) Balta, *Between Religion and Language: Turkish-Speaking Christians, Jews and Greek-Speaking Muslims and Catholics in the Ottoman Empire* (Istanbul: Eren, 2011); Evangelia Balta, *Beyond the Language Frontier. Studies on the Karamanli and the Karamanlidikas Printing* (Istanbul: Isis, 2010); Evangelia Balta and Matthias Kappler, *Cries and Whispers in Karamanlidika Books: Proceedings of the First International Conference on Karamanlidika Studies (Nicosia, 11th-13th September 2008)*, *Turcologica*, vol. 83 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008).

## Shared worship places and ritual practices

In terms of religiosity, ritual practices and beliefs of the Rums of Cappadocia were often quite different from those defined by the head of the Orthodox Church. In the same way, even though most of them were Sunni, the Muslims that settled in Cappadocian villages had ritual practices that were also often different from Sunni Islam as defined by urban *Ulemas* (Muslim scholars). Among “heterodox” practices were shared ritual practices. Influenced by local beliefs common to Christians and Muslims and largely influenced by Sufi orders, especially Bektashis, these practices were at the heart of people's daily lives and interactions.

Many religious buildings, which mostly dated back to Byzantine times, were believed by both Christians and Muslims to be places where their wishes could be granted. In Selime, near Gelveri, a small troglodyte chapel called *Yedi Evliyalar* (Seven Saints) was visited by barren women and sick people.<sup>83</sup> The ritual was the same for all worshippers, regardless of their religious affiliation. In the chapel, a reliquary covered by a green tissue contained the skulls of seven saints. Worshippers covered their shoulders with it and hanged a piece of their clothes in or before the church. In Germir, near Kayseri, mothers brought their children with speaking or walking disabilities to the underground church of St. John the Theologian, called *Yanni Dede* by locals. Many other sanctuaries were visited by Christians and Muslims for therapeutic purposes. Paralysis, fever, skin diseases or illness of the mind were reasons for holding rituals in these shared worship places.

Most of these sacred places were old churches located outside villages and no more used as regular place of worship by the Christians. The new church of Saint Macrina, built in 1843 in the village of Axo (today's Hasaköy), or the church of St. John-the-Russian built in the center of Prokopi (Ürgüp) in 1892 were some of the exceptions. Next to constructed sanctuaries, natural sanctuaries such as trees, springs or hills were also frequently shared as sacred sites. On the Muslim side, if mosques were forbidden to Christians, *türbes* (mausoleum) and *tekkes* (monasteries) were regularly visited by Rums for votive offerings and prayers.

Perhaps the most interesting shared sacred site in Cappadocia was the St Mamas shrine. Located in a small village (today's Gökçe) close to the Karamanli settlement of Gelveri, in western Cappadocia, the shrine has relics attributed to a local saint called Mamas and discovered in the early nineteenth century. A Bektashi tekke was built there a few years after the discovery of the relics. It rapidly became famous for its power of healing mental illness. Farasopoulos, a Rum writer of the late nineteenth century, described the use of the sanctuary as follows: “In this church both Christians and Turks perform their religious duties, each after his manner, strange to say without the least friction. There are in it nine pictures



<sup>83</sup> Frederick William Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, vol. I, II vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928); Anastasios M. Levidis, *Αἱ Ἐν Μονολίθοις Μοναὶ Τῆς Καππαδοκίας Καὶ Λυκαονίας* (Κωνσταντινούπολις, 1899).

(*eikones*) representing St Mamas, Saints Constantine and Helen and the Virgin.<sup>84</sup> In addition to the individual visits for therapeutic purpose, two weekly worship services were performed there: on Fridays was organized the *namaz* and on Sundays the Christian mass.<sup>85</sup> In fact, while the dervish lodge occupied the site, the tomb was under a double supervision: on one hand the dervishes; on the other hand the parish of Gelveri managed together the shrine. As a result, it did not belong to one specific faith.

There were also shared rituals. Apotropaic gestures and rituals such as making the sign of the cross, blessing children, flour and bread by Christian priests were performed by Muslim families. In turn, Rums visited *hocas* (Muslim sages) to listen to prayers in Arabic and ask for talismans and other kinds of spiritual help. Shared processions and other rituals for rainmaking were also frequent in a region where drought occurred regularly. All inhabitants, from the Muslim shepherd to the Christian craftsman, took part in religious processions led by a priest and a *hoca* together or separately. In Selime, the *Yedi Evliyalari* relics were taken from their reliquary, placed in a bag, and plunged into the river. When rain began to fall, the relics were returned to the chapel. In Limni, the skull of a dead priest was taken from the cemetery and hanged in the mill to make the rain come. The skull was then reburied after rain started to fall. In the village of Kenatala, a double procession was organized: Christians and Muslims walked together to the sacred spring of St. George, known as Khidr by the Muslims. There, the priest performed a Christian service and collected donations. And then, the Muslims took water from the fountain made their ablution, and performed their *namaz*

The feast called the *Saya* should be mentioned as a last example of shared celebrations. In Cappadocia, the *Saya* was celebrated on the 5th of January, namely on the eve of Theophany. It was probably one of the most important times of intercommunal sharing. The ethnographer Pertev Naili Boratav, who studied the *Saya* in villages of Eastern Anatolia and Azerbaijan in the 1960s and 1970s, suggested that it had been imported from Central Asia to Anatolia by the Turks and described it as a pastoral feast, organized one hundred days before the introduction of the ram into the flock. Its calendar day consequently changed according to the region and the climate. In Cappadocia, however, the *Saya* was celebrated on the 5th of January among both Muslims and Christians. Testimonies of Karamanlis show that it was a very important celebration for both. Today, it continues to be celebrated in a few villages in Turkey and also in Nea-Karvali, Neokaisareia, Kappadokiko, and Askites – four villages founded in Greece by the Rums, who left respectively Gelveri, Kayseri, Cukur, and Agirnas in 1923. In Greece, there is no local example of such a celebration. Only villages of Cappadocian refugees have maintained this tradition, testifying the importance of this feast for Rum communities which had lived in Cappadocia.

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<sup>84</sup> Simeon Farasopoulos, *Τα Σύλατα. Μελετή του νομού Ικονίου υπό Γεωγραφικών* (Αθηναις: Φιλολογικὴν καὶ Εθνολογικὴν Ἐποψίν, 1895).

<sup>85</sup> Levidis, *Αἱ ἐν Μονολίθοις Μοναὶ τῆς Καππαδοκίας καὶ Λυκαονίας*, 126; Symeon Pharasopoulos, *Τα Σύλατα. Μελετή του νομού Ικονίου υπό Γεωγραφικών* (Αθηναις: Φιλολογικὴν καὶ Εθνολογικὴν Ἐποψίν, 1895), 74; Ioannis Ioannidis, *Καισαρεία Μητροπολιτερί βε Μααλουμάτη Μουτενεββιά* (Δερὶ Σααδετ: Αλεξανδρος Νομισματιδης Ματπασσηνδα, 1896). Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, 84.

## Conclusion

At the heart of shared beliefs and practices were issues linked to health, fertility, and abundance. In a rural area where doctors were scarce, epidemics and diseases frequent, belief in thaumaturgic virtues of saints was often the only, or the last hope of villagers.

Shared worship practices were pragmatic, even though each religious group believed its members observed the true religion. Religious boundaries were crossed through shared practices in a prayer, a blessing, or a celebration. To use the words of the historian Michel de Certeau, these shared worship practices were “a belief in the belief of the other”.<sup>86</sup> In the multi-religious context of the Ottoman Empire, this expression took on a more radical meaning: the other here is not the other believer of the same religion but the believer of the other religion. Sharing a holy place or a belief was in this sense a form of confirmation of the power of the belief’s object because the other religion’s faithful believed in it.

Barely one year after the creation of the Turkish Orthodox Patriarchate in 1922, the end of the Turkish War of Independence and the negotiations in Lausanne put an end to religious coexistence in Cappadocia. The Karamanlis, because of their religion, had to leave Turkey, together with other Rums, with the exchange of population between Greece and Turkey.

**Culture, History & Society**

## Hagia Sophia: Ideology and Symbolism in the Conversion and Transformation of Religious Spaces



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The 2020 conversion of Hagia Sophia from a museum to a mosque has initiated a series of discussions, both cultural and political, at national and international levels. Conversion of religious and sacred places has been carried out

<sup>86</sup> Michel Certeau (de), ‘Une Pratique Sociale de La Différence: Croire’, in *Faire Croire. Modalités de La Diffusion et de La Réception Des Messages Religieux Du XVII Au XVe Siècle. Actes de Table Ronde de Rome*, vol. 51 (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 1981), 363–83.

<sup>87</sup> Based on FY’s zoom presentation on 23 January 2021



continuously over the centuries and monuments have been given highly symbolic meanings by different cultures.

Adolphe Riegl (1858- 1905), a well-known art historian, was one of the pioneers who classified buildings as monuments and/or as historical buildings. According to Riegl, a construction was built to be a “monument” to commemorate an event or to impress a given public. It was therefore designed and realized according to a pre- determined programme, usually for the purposes of propaganda. Historical buildings were those which acquired in time different meanings and



perceptions as a result of intricate social and cultural relations and represented an “age value” of their own. In this sense, Hagia Sophia started as a monument with its originality and authenticity but has been over-loaded with different phases of “age value” as a historical building, leaving in each case its traces on public memory. In our contemporary world too, definitions, perceptions and receptions of monuments change according to their “age value”.

## The Monument as a Church: Hagia Sophia

It is generally accepted that there was originally a pagan temple in the place where Hagia Sophia stands today but there is no archaeological evidence to support this. Historical texts inform us that the first Hagia Sophia had a basilical plan and a timber roof, constructed at the time of Constantine I in 360, after his conversion to Christianity.

This first version of Hagia Sophia was partially destroyed by fire during a riot in 404 but was renovated and opened again in 415 with the same basilical plan. However, it was once more damaged by fire during the Nikea riot in 532 against Justinian I who summoned two experts from Western Anatolia – Isodoros of Miletus and Tralles from Aydın – to reconstruct the building. The choice of these two men was interesting since they were not architects by training – one was a mathematician and the other an engineer. The unique constructional characteristics of the building with its large dome and “domed basilical” plan incorporated the traditional basilical plan of Byzantine churches with their theoretical background in mathematics. As building material, not only stone and brick but also marble columns from classical sites – mainly in Ephesus and Baalbek – were brought to the construction site. Appropriating previous construction materials from classical sites was a Roman tradition which continued in the building of monuments in Anatolia during the Seljuk period and mosques in the Ottoman era.

The new Hagia Sophia must have been considered an impressive monument within the urban texture of the city, conveying the imperial power of Justinian. Its dome was the largest and highest at the time at 55 m. in height and 32.81 m. in diameter. In comparison, the Pantheon in Rome was 43 by 43 m. The interior decoration of the new Hagia Sophia was only completed during the reign of Justinian II (565-578). During the earthquakes in 553 and 557 the dome and the half domes were damaged. The main dome collapsed in 558 and was



repaired by the nephew of Isodoros who increased its height using a lighter material.

Until the 5th century the building was called *Megale Ekklesia* (The Big Church). Only later was it called `Sophia` meaning “wisdom” which is a concept that exists in Hellenistic philosophy and religion, Platonism, Gnosticism and Christian theology, embodying Human Wisdom, Demonic Wisdom and Godly Wisdom. The concept

of wisdom was symbolised by this huge dome which gave the observers the feeling that it was “without limits or borders and exists in the void”. Thus, Hagia Sophia became an iconic structure, a



symbol of Christian orthodoxy and its most important holy space during the Byzantine period. Its presence sanctified the city of Constantinople as the capital of the Empire.

During the period of Byzantine Iconoclasm (726-842), when figural representation was banned in churches, all such paintings and decorations in Hagia Sophia were torn down. The figural mosaics that survive were made later. The only decorations that date back to the days of Justinian are the non-figural ones.

Constantinople and Hagia Sophia were ransacked by the Crusaders. A Latin Catholic Empire was established 1202-1261 when many precious objects from different churches and palaces were transferred to churches in Europe. Later, Hagia Sophia came under the control of the Venetians and acquired the status of a Catholic Cathedral where European monarchs were crowned. Michael Paleologus, the Byzantine Emperor who had retreated to Nicea (Izmit) during the Latin occupation of İstanbul, took over the city with the help of the Genoese. At the time Hagia Sophia was in a dilapidated condition. The four buttresses to support the weight of the dome were probably constructed during this period, while other buttresses were built in 1317, 1344 and 1346. The Spanish Ambassador Clavijo, at the court of Tamerlane in Samarkand in 1403, mentioned the poor condition of Hagia Sophia and its surroundings. Nevertheless, certain renovations, new relics and icons sustained the building as the imperial church until the arrival of the Ottomans.

## **Transformation: Ayasofya as Cami-i Kebir**

The conquest of the city by the Ottomans on 29 May 1453, affirmed Sultan Mehmed II's destiny as Muslim heir to the Eastern Roman Empire. The church was believed to have been endowed with special holiness, and its conversion fulfilled the Prophet Muhammad's prophecy that it was predestined to become

a mosque after the conquest of Constantinople by the Muslims.<sup>88</sup> This official conversion also annulled the ecclesiastical union of the Latin and Greek Churches, which had until then been celebrated at Hagia Sophia. The Orthodox Church from then on was to survive under Ottoman protection for several centuries. Converting a church to a mosque had been a tradition dating back to Orhan Gazi, the first *Bey* of the Ottoman dynasty, who conquered Nicea and converted the church of Hagia Sophia there to a mosque in the 14th century.

In Mehmed II's reign, improvements were undertaken for the transformation and safeguarding of Hagia Sophia:

- a) The addition of a *mihrab* that changed the direction of prayer from East (Jerusalem) to the South (Mekke),
- b) The creation of a Foundation/Endowment Deed that guaranteed the safe maintenance of the building by attributing the income of various assets to Hagia Sophia.
- c) The assignment of sixty-two people to provide various services for the building maintenance, paid by the endowment.
- d) The compilation of documents written about the building for Sultan Mehmed II's personal library.
- e) The construction of a minaret in timber.
- f) The construction of a *medrese*<sup>89</sup> to the north.
- g) The transfer of the patriarchate to the Church of the Holy Apostles before being moved to the Convent of Pammakaristos.
- h) The upkeep of the mosaics which were left open until the reign of Sultan Mahmud I (1730-1754) who then ordered them to be covered with plaster.

Hagia Sophia thus became Ayasofya and was considered the main mosque of the city (*Cami-i Kebir* in the Ottoman times and Ulu Cami in modern Turkey) where Friday Prayers were performed and the *hutbe* (the political discourse of the week) was delivered. However, the sanctification that was necessary for a settlement to become a capital city of the empire could not be attributed to the presence of Ayasofya but rather to the Mausoleum of Hâlid Bin Zeyd Ebû Eyyüb el Ensâri, in whose house the Prophet Muhammed stayed in Medine. Eyyüb el Ensari was the flag bearer of the Arab army when they surrounded İstanbul and his tomb was discovered in the district of Eyüp after Sultan Mehmet II had captured the city. The presence of this tomb gave sanctity to İstanbul which was transformed into a multicultural yet Islamic city with Islamic institutions and new buildings.

Ottoman Sultans ordered that their own monumental complexes be named after them. These included various Islamic institutions as well as mausoleums in the city, signifying their political and religious power. Those who did not have such complexes constructed in the capital, including Selim II, Murad III and

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<sup>88</sup> This is an event predicted in an eschatological hadith, that is, a saying attributed to Prophet Muhammed.

<sup>89</sup> A theological school.

Mehmet IV, wanted to have their mausoleums set in the garden of Ayasofya, enhancing the building's imperial character.

In the 16th century, Architect Mimar Sinan, the head of the Guild of Royal Architects, carried out some necessary restoration work on the building. He constructed two other minarets on the order of Sultan Selim II and replaced the wooden one built during the reign of Mehmet II with a stone minaret.

Mythologies and stories about İstanbul and the foundation of Ayasofya were re-adapted or recreated during the Ottoman Period. This is particularly pertinent to the Turkish-Islamic tradition. Arab countries and Iran do not share the same ideology or symbolism concerning Ayasofya. Historicity allows the facts to be reinterpreted, thus keeping the subject "up to date" in popular culture.

The innovation of a new royal ritual in the third quarter of the 16th century contributed more to the holiness of Ayasofya. The Ottoman Sultan would go there on the night of the Holy Decree which falls on the 27th day of the month of Ramadan, i.e. the day when the Koran was revealed to Prophet Muhammed. The Sultan would stay in the mosque all night, praying and reading the Koran together with his subjects. This practice gave way to other public festivities such as the circumcision ceremonies of the princes and the public appearance of the Sultan going for Friday prayers. The same rituals continued throughout the 19th century, but later the ceremonies were transferred, first to Nusretiye on the Bosphorous and then to the Yıldız Palace Mosque. The Topkapı Palace next to Ayasofya was no longer the Imperial palace, and Ayasofya together with its neighbouring palace had become locations representing only a glorious past and attracting admiration.

In the 19th century Ayasofya needed a thorough restoration. Gaspare Fossatti and his brother Guiseppe were invited to do the work from 1847 to 1849, during the reign of Sultan Abdülmeçid. They filled in the cracks in the dome, uncovered and restored the mosaics, drew their compositions and covered them again. Large round panels with calligraphic writings of the names of the caliphs were hung high on the walls, the *medrese* was rebuilt, and another Royal Lodge for the Sultan, and a *Mukavvithane*,<sup>90</sup> were constructed. In 1849 the mosque reopened with a great ceremony and pomp. A medal was minted in gold, and silver by an English man named J Robertson who was then working at the royal mint. An album with pictures showing the work of the Fossatti Brothers was published in 1852 in London and was dedicated to the Sultan. It was important for the Sultan to keep the building in good condition and his choice of a western architect to do the restoration was significant, since Sultan Abdülmeçid had been in close contact with western sovereigns. Ayasofya became a monument to draw more admiration in the second half of the 19th century. The impact of tourism in the city, publications on İstanbul, and the high percentage of Europeans living in the city increased the interest in the building for which the memoirs of travellers



<sup>90</sup> This is the room where clocks are kept and time for prayer is announced.

reflected great admiration. At about the same time permission was given to non-Muslims to visit Ayasofya as well as the Sultan Ahmet Mosque.

In the turbulent period towards the end of the 19th century, cultural and political values were reinterpreted or revived. For example, during the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-1878 when the Russian armies supported by a Slavic Alliance were very near İstanbul, they performed their ritual ceremonies towards Ayasofya. This coincided with the Greek independence movement and their ideological claims to reconstruct the Byzantine Kingdom by taking over İstanbul. The photographs of French soldiers in front of a screen representing Hagia Sophia in Thessaloniki during World War I, shows the approval of this aim by the French, whose army together with that of the British had occupied İstanbul during the war. Hagia Sophia, as the symbol of İstanbul, became a site again to be reconquered. Images of Hagia Sophia circulated on tobacco papers, thereby keeping its symbolism alive. This spurred a new mythology in Islamic popular culture with claims that the caliphate was endowed upon Yavuz Sultan Selim I. in Hagia Sophia, reinforcing the venue's divine character as a holy place in Islam.

Before becoming a museum Ayasofya continued to be used as a mosque until 1934. The Night of the Holy Decree ceremony was held there in February 1932 when the Koran was recited for the first time in Turkish. This was a major ceremony to celebrate the Republican reforms.

## The Museum: Ayasofya Müzesi



The Director of the newly founded Byzantine Institute in the USA, Thomas Whitmore, applied to the Turkish Government in 1931 to research the mosaics of Hagia Sophia. Uncovering the *in situ* mosaics, he invited experts from Italy to do the restoration work which continued for seven years. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk ordered the Minister of Education to declare Ayasofya a museum in 1934 – which made it possible for it to remain open.. It was later included in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

When Ayasofya was opened to the public as a museum, Topkapı Palace had already been serving as a museum for a year. The act of transforming two iconic buildings of İstanbul into museums, one representing the Orthodox-Byzantine period, and the other the Ottoman imperial era and the Caliphate has, in my view, “secularized” the city of İstanbul. Once the religious capital of two difference empires, İstanbul had now become a city of a secular, modern Turkey.

Unfortunately, the new status of Ayasofya, as in the case of many other changes introduced since the foundation of the Republic, was not accepted by those who were against the reforms of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Religion has become politicised especially since the 1950s. The ideology and symbolism of Ayasofya as a monument connected to the triumph of Islam and the conquest



of Istanbul by Mehmet II had not lost its grip on a sizeable portion of the people. Youth organisations of political parties with religious tendencies, such as the Saadet Party of Necmettin Erbakan or the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), made their members take an oath that they would one day pray in Ayasofya again. This day came in July 2020 when the building was recontextualised for the second time as a mosque. National and international reactions to this transformation were varied, yet the Greek Orthodox priest Evangelos Papanikolaou could claim that it was better for Hagia Sophia to be restored to a mosque than to remain a museum.

History shows us that de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation of monuments and sites is a recurrent phenomenon. Religious sites from pagan times up to the present have undergone changes. The Roman temple in Damascus was changed with the construction of a church and then was completely transformed by the building of a mosque by the Umayyad Dynasty in the 8th century. A cathedral was constructed within the monumental Grenada Mosque in the 13th century when the city was reconquered by the Christians. Many Ottoman mosques have been converted to churches in the Balkans. In the 21st century such issues should be treated with new concepts of understanding and new ways of perception. Such monuments should be considered as spaces of memory, and places for intercultural theology which together form the common cultural heritage in the history of humanity.



## Translating an Ottoman-language history of Athens

by Thomas Sinclair  
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Mahmut Efendi's history of Athens from earliest times down to the first century A.D. was written in Ottoman during the first half of the 18th century. He was a Turkish *mufti* (a legal official working in the Islamic courts) whose family lived in Athens and nearby.<sup>91</sup> Part of the interest in the text lies in the Ottoman 'take' on Classical Antiquity. Such a knowledge of, and closeness to, a civilisation prior to and in many ways at variance with Islamic theology is not as strange as it

<sup>91</sup> Topkapı Sarayı Emanet Hazinesi no. 1411, 2b. Up to p. 240b of the MS the text of the *Tarih* is given in transliterated form in Gülçin Tunalı, *Another kind of Hellenism? Appropriation of ancient Athens via Greek channels for the sake of good advice as reflected in TARİH-İ MEDİNETÜ'L-HUKEMA*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Ruhr Universität Bochum, 2013. Tunalı's dissertation is available on the internet. For the whole text in transliteration, see now Gülçin Tunalı, *Bir Osmanlı Müftüsünün Gözünden Atina Tarihi*, Istanbul: Vakıfbank 2020



might seem: there are precedents among Ottoman writers. One of Mahmut's motives for writing the history may have been to consult Athenian history as a source of solutions for the desperate state of the Ottoman empire at the time: loss of territory, loss of control over many regions, loss of tax revenue, monetary shrinkage.

Mahmut went to Istanbul in 1094/1682-83 for a *medrese* education and returned, with a wife, in 1110/1698-99. His work on the history must have been begun before 1714, since he tells us that it was interrupted by the Mora campaign (the Ottoman counterattack to reclaim the Peloponnese from Venice) which began in that year. The work must have been slowed down by a second and parallel appointment as *vaiz* or religious instructor at Nauplion on the east shore of the Peloponnese (1127/1715). It must have been finished after a visit to Istanbul in 1150/1737-38, when Mahmut met the Grand Vizier and a circle of *littérateurs* who gave him advice about the history's refashioning.

The text draws extensively on a history of Athens written by a priest and teacher, subsequently monk and bishop, Grigoris Kontaris (Γρηγόρης Κονταρής), in Greek and published in Venice in 1675.<sup>92</sup> Kontaris' history is based on well-known Classical sources such as Herodotus, Thucydides and Plutarch. From a study of Greek literary and theological-philosophical preoccupations in Venice at the time I concluded that the history of Athens lies well outside these preoccupations: it is a one-off, and an inspiration outside Greek circles in Venice should be looked for. This inspiration, I argue, must have been a French doctor, Jacob Spon, later to be the first serious student of buildings and inscriptions in Athens itself (on a visit of 1675-76 – a date only remotely connected to that of the publication of Kontaris' work). But Spon had already published a history of Athens himself, in response to a report on the antiquities of Athens by Jacques Babin, a Jesuit priest who had had a post in Athens and returned from there in 1672. Spon published the report, appending to it his own history.

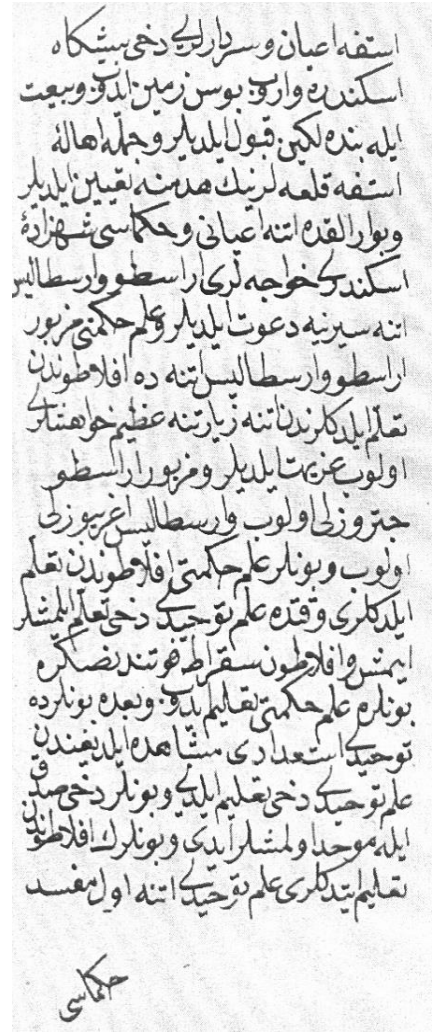
But, to return to Mahmut Efendi, how does that author derive his narrative from Kontaris' history? Mahmut states very plainly that he does not know Greek (which may mean that he cannot read Greek but had a working conversational knowledge). He relies instead on two Greeks, Kavallaris, a teacher, and Sotiris, a monk and teacher, both later to become bishops. Mahmut Efendi's text is a shorter and summary version of Kontaris', but otherwise mirrors it – this discovery was made by Gülçin Tunali, who has published the text of Mahmut's history. Given that Mahmut never refers to Kontaris but does refer to several of the famous Classical sources such as Plutarch and Thucydides, it seems that Kavallaris and Sotiris were fooling Mahmut into thinking that they were drawing directly on the Classical sources rather than on Kontaris' synthesis. If Mahmut does not know Greek, neither do Kavallaris and Sotiris know Turkish. What is the way out? A mediator for sure, and Mahmut states that there was one; but

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<sup>92</sup> Γρηγόρης Κονταρής, *Ἱστορίαι παλαιού και πάνυ ωφέλιμοι της περίφημου πόλεως Ἀθήνης* [Ancient and In All Ways Beneficial Histories of the Famous City of Athens], Venice 1675.

with dark identity, personality and administrative positions. From the many unforced inaccuracies in Mahmut's text in the representation of Greek and other foreign names (including, sometimes, several different Ottoman spellings of the same name), and from other clues, I reason that the mediator was a Turk who understood Greek, though not fully able to work fluently in the language. The mediator dictated to a scribe rather than Mahmut Efendi himself. The text, when complete, was then copied in a very clear hand on the manuscript which is preserved in the Topkapı Palace library.

Mahmut implies that in a first stage the text was composed in a series of sections, but it then became clear that a second stage was needed: a consolidation, in which the parts were stitched together. It is unlikely that this is all. In the text one can make a very clear distinction of style. One style is clearly attributable to Mahmut Efendi himself. The first four pages of the history, in which the circumstances and procedures of the text's composition are expounded, are in their nature not drawn from Kontaris. Here is an elaborate syntax and a dense, determined loading with erudite and *recherché* Arabic vocabulary. The result is a highly precise, sequential, and elegant narration, satisfying as expression but taxing to all except the best-read in Arabic. A second such passage is that of the order for Socrates' execution (on grounds of impiety towards the city's gods), which was probably rewritten (rather than initially composed) by Mahmut. An intermediate category is passages having to do with historical events well after antiquity and with Classical buildings in the city. For example, Mahmut narrates the visit of the Ottoman sultan Mehmet II to Athens and, elsewhere, the Venetian bombardment of the Parthenon. He also describes the construction of the Parthenon, where the source is evidently a French or Italian scholar studying antiquity – in fact Jacob Spon himself, with whose description there are correspondences.<sup>93</sup> In these passages the language, again, is at least precise and the vocabulary apposite, which is not to say the translator into English can sail through them.



The second major style, antithetical to the first, appears principally in narrative sections summarised from Kontaris. The expression is equally loaded with Arabic vocabulary as far as possible; however, the nature of the subject often prevents this as, for example, when, in a naval battle, undersea divers bore holes in their enemy's ships. But the style is elliptic in making references to events or aspects of events, previous or now under narration, which are so brief, covert, and cryptic that they have to be decoded. On the other hand,

<sup>93</sup> On this matter, Thomas Sinclair, 'Mahmut Efendi on the Construction of the Parthenon: A Note on His sources', *Archivum Ottomanicum* 39 (2022), 241-89

repetitions, arbitrary and inexplicable, also occur. Syntactically the style is chaotic: breaks occur in mid-sentence where one syntax is abandoned, and another adopted. The grammar of certain words is highly dubious; we have already mentioned the sometimes wildly off-centre renderings of Greek names, and the rather surprising representation of the same name in three or four different forms. This style can be interpreted as follows. The mediator and translator, having difficulty with the spoken Greek of Kavallaris and Sotiris, translates orally into Turkish – a smooth, literate, grammatically coherent oral presentation can hardly be expected. The scribe writes down what he hears, though even here there is scope for further mistakes or omissions. Mahmut Efendi then looks at the text and decides that it must be made to look respectable. He introduces as much Arabic vocabulary as possible; a cursory browsing suggests a highly literate author, though a more careful reading reveals the awkward, elliptic, somewhat broken style described above.

In translating the text, I realised almost from the start that neither style could be fairly reproduced in English. The priority was readability. In the passages composed by Mahmut Efendi himself and not derived (at one remove) from Kontaris, I have broken up the long, complicated sentences, and have tried to match the author's vocabulary. The result has a certain style but not that of the original! In the narrative passages deriving at more than one remove from Kontaris I have again broken up the sentences to help the translation's readability. I do not attempt to reproduce the syntactical breaks: it could be argued that if they are there in the original, they should be in the translation too, but I see no sense in burdening the reader with a text which itself requires reinterpretation.

Part of the interest of Mahmut Efendi's text lies in the expression. How can the content of a Greek text be converted into the content of an Ottoman text? Is the expression in the Ottoman version an adequate vehicle for the sentiments of the Greek text? We have to make allowance for two things: firstly, Mahmut's text is shorter than that of Kontaris, and proceeds to an extent by means of selected episodes and summarisation. Secondly Ottoman grammar and syntax lie far from those of Greek. But given these two differences it seems to me the Ottoman adequately purveys the original's content.

Where a certain Islamisation and Ottomanisation is in question is not so much in the content, but more in the language itself. Taxes are called *rūsūmat ve öşür*: exactly how an Ottoman describes the traditional Islamic taxes and tithes.<sup>94</sup> A further linguistic challenge is translating into a third language such as English. If nothing else such translation casts light on the issues of preserving content

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<sup>94</sup> A possible Islamisation of Athenian history in Mahmut's text is the Athenian statesman Pericles' appeal to the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem as an argument for the construction of the Parthenon. Since Athenians cannot travel to Jerusalem, he argues, they need an equivalent temple in their own city. Mahmut is therefore resorting to Islamic tradition and imagery as a way of constructing the 5th-century B.C. Pericles' presentation of his case. On this, Elizabeth Key Fowden, 'The Parthenon Mosque, King Solomon and the Greek Sages', in Maria Georgopoulou, Konstantinos Thanasakis (eds.), *Ottoman Athens. Archaeology, Topography, History*. Athens: Gennadius Library & Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation 2019, pp. 92-94.

and style in a different grammar and according to different linguistic conventions. A different question again relates to the Ottoman of the time: if we are right in our distinction of styles, then the syntactically and grammatically less correct, and correspondingly more elliptic style of the narrative passages based on Kontaris must give us a glimpse, but only a glimpse, of the manner of Ottoman speech at the time.

Mahmut Efendi's text is selective and summary, much of it built around individual personalities and their effect on the course of the city's history. Kontaris' text has the same character: Mahmut merely amplifies that character. The text illustrates how an Ottoman, and one employed in a Muslim court, could become interested in the buildings of the Greek Classical past which he sees around him: Mahmut's descriptions of buildings are again selective, but fairly accurate so far as they go. The Ottoman official also takes seriously the city's Classical past. As suggested above the author may be searching in the history of the City of Learned Men (*medinetü'l-hükemâ*) for clues to help in the rehabilitation of the Ottoman present. That Classical civilisation is so different and theologically so antithetical to the Islamic equivalent means that Mahmut sees its study as an issue of enrichment rather than of appropriation. Lastly the history has to do only in a minor sense (the incorporation of content from Spon's work) with westernisation - supposedly in progress at the time of its composition.

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## **KEBAN: The Politics of Diversion and Exile on the Euphrates**

by **Joseph Lombardo**

Independent Scholar

Turkey's megaproject, the Keban Dam in the mid-1970s was the first of many large dams built to correct the uneven distribution of power in the country. Influenced by previous American engineering feats, Keban was partly an economic program and partly an effort to incorporate the socially-isolated and politically-alienated Kurds and eastern Turkish villagers peacefully. Yet this 'sinew of development' seemed to be anything but a means to bring the former Ottoman heartland together and there is a naïve sense of triumphalism on the part of Cold War America, and its hopeful clients in countries like Turkey.<sup>95</sup> What is the legacy of US aid in the decades after such major projects? How do they affect the political genes of a host country? How do American 'big ideas' of development affect the lives of those in the shadows of megaprojects?

In 1967 Dr Mustafa Parlar, a Fulbright Fellow in the Department of Electrical Engineering at the University of California, Berkeley, drove to New York, *en route* back to his native Turkey.<sup>96</sup> It appears that he took the southern route across the continental United States, with a stopover in Tennessee. Embedded through the winding valleys of the Tennessee River, millions of kilowatts of electricity churned forth from the dams and power plants that were symbols of American industrial might. For Parlar this must have been inspiring. Upon his return to Ankara, the young engineer had become a zealous admirer of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA).

The TVA became a focal point of debate among Turkish engineers during a restorative period following the 1960 coup d'état. In the minds of Parlar and his contemporaries, the TVA represented the solution to an old problem, the so-called Kurdish Question – primarily an issue of self-determination for the Kurds in eastern Turkey. There, tensions between Turks and Kurds spiked as the new Republic embarked on a series of military operations. Three major Kurdish rebellions occurred over a 14-year period. The first was in 1925 led by the charismatic Sunni cleric, Shaikh Said, who sought to restore Ottoman Islamic rule in the city of Diyarbakır. The second was the Ararat Rebellion (1927-31) when the state won a major victory over a small Kurdish proto-state at the foot of Mount Ararat. The final push for Kurdish independence was the Dersim Rebellion from 1937 until 1939 which again ended in defeat for the insurrectionists. By the 1950s, most organized Kurdish resistance came to a halt and the Turkish state began to strengthen its grip on the East. In place of arms, ruling elites would enhance their hold in the area through the control of the region's most outstanding natural inheritance – the Euphrates River.

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<sup>95</sup> From Dr. Christopher J. Sneddon, 'The 'Sinew of Development' Cold War Geopolitics, Technical Expertise, and Water Resource Development in Southeast Asia, 1954-1973,' *The Social Studies of Science*, 42(4),2012: 564-590.

<sup>96</sup> John G. Burnett, "Turkey—Mustafa N. Parlar" a letter dated June 29th, 1967, in "D&R Corporation Records (MC #014), Box 68, Folder 5, "Turkey – Keban Dam, 1963-1968" in Princeton University Library.



In 1962, Turkey's State Planning Organization (SPO) reported on the potential benefits of damming the Euphrates at its confluence along the Tunceli-Elazığ border. Entitled the 'The Parliamentary Research Commission Report and Addendum on the Keban Dam and the Lower Euphrates Basin Development Project', it included visions of the future dam from the Electrical Works Survey Administration, the Bureau of Energy, and the State Hydraulic Works.<sup>97</sup> Why a dam and why the Euphrates? Unlike its neighbors in the Soviet Caucasus and in the Arab states, Turkey had little oil and natural gas wealth. Yet within its national borders lay one of the largest tributaries in the Middle East, the Euphrates, waiting to generate hydropower. In addition, the river itself forms a bridge at the 'natural' boundary between eastern and western Anatolia. The Keban Project aimed both to supplement the existing electrical consumption of the Turkish industrial base in Istanbul and Ankara in the West and to accelerate industrialization in the East.

The authors of the 1962 Report gave the impression, however, of consensus about the future capacity of the Keban Dam. Yet, by 1965, when the foundation of the dam would be laid, it appeared that not only had a collective agreement not been reached but that engineers and politicians were split over how the project would be implemented. These exchanges focused on whether the hydroelectricity would indeed be equitably distributed and on what kind of managing authority ought to be established. In 1963, a young engineer, Korkut Özal, submitted legislation for a TVA-style authority for the Keban. Like Mustafa Parlar, Özal had spent time in the United States studying reclamation efforts and felt that a TVA-style model would be beneficial for the Keban Project. His proposal, however, faced opposition within the SPO about whether the model's projected 'regionalism' would be politically appropriate.<sup>98</sup> Several years later Parlar would also argue for the creation of a TVA program, dubbing it the Euphrates Basin Authority, but with power to slant the benefits of the Keban Dam more towards advancing the material conditions of those closest to its source in provincial Elazığ.<sup>99</sup> Parlar was a much more aggressive proponent of the TVA model than Özal, reportedly saying that western Turkey had been for "far too long" draining the resources of the East, and that such an authority would be able judiciously to redress the asymmetrical relationship.<sup>100</sup> Beginning in 1967, Parlar engaged in talks with a small American engineering consulting firm, the Development & Resources Corporation (D&R), in order to flesh out what such a regional authority could look like. The choice of D&R was not accidental, for its founder was none other than David Lilienthal, the chief architect behind the TVA. In a letter to Lilienthal, William E. Warne, Vice President of D&R, said that Parlar was taking the lead in supporting a TVA-style program, arguing in no uncertain terms that the existing disparities

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<sup>97</sup> "Keban Barajı ve Aşağı Fırat Havzası Kalkınma Projesi hakkında Meclis Araştırma Komisyonu raporu ve ekleri" 1.3.1962.

<sup>98</sup> Parlar also thought, however, like the SPO that such an authority might undermine the state's authority in the implementation of a TVA program on the Euphrates. William E. Warne 'Memo to John Oliver', August 7-15th, 1967. As found in 'D&R Corporation Records (MC #014), Box 68, Folder 5, "Turkey – Keban Dam, 1963-1968', in Princeton University Library.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> H.D. Frederickson and John L. Swift, 'Turkey—Confidential', a letter dated October 15th, 1967, in "D&R Corporation Records (MC #014), Box 68, Folder 5, "Turkey – Keban Dam, 1963-1968" in the Princeton University Library.

between East and West would cause even more 'serious problems' if a TVA on the Euphrates were **not** established.

While the D&R representatives were sensitive to the problems expressed by SPO, they felt that there was an insufficient understanding of development on the part of their Turkish colleagues. The chief economist of the company, Frederick Moore, underscored the concerns of the SPO, writing that 'there is a need for a systematic regional development program' but the 'central government fears to establish a regional authority because of the possibly divisive influences it might have'. At the same time, in a letter to the General Director of the Electrical Works Survey Administration, D&R President John Oliver reaffirmed their expertise on the matter, suggesting that the Turkish approach lacked a certain holism:

We prefer to inter-relate them in projects embracing all aspects of land and water resource development, thus providing a sound base for evaluation of economic, physical and institutional alternatives across a broad spectrum of fields.<sup>101</sup>

Reiterating this stance, Frederick Moore said that much of the problem could be solved if the SPO were to 'look at the development of the region as a whole' in contrast to the prevailing method of project management which was to see the Keban Project through the individual prerogatives of the different state bureaus. Moore, along with Oliver, indeed suggested that the SPO ought to take control of the operation with a series of 'specialized activities'. Moore argued that the benefits of such a comprehensively-executed program would socialize the hydropower of the Keban Dam and thereby negate the issue of separatism.<sup>102</sup>

What the representatives of D&R misrecognized, however, was that the very evocation of the term 'regionalism' already struck a sensitive nerve in government. This stemmed from Lilienthal's own fixation with decentralized planning as a universally-desirable method of development. During and after his tenure on the board of the TVA, Lilienthal actively stressed that its core achievement was that it was a genuine product of 'grass roots democracy'.<sup>103</sup> At the dawn of the Cold War, Lilienthal and the United States understood full well that they needed to offer an alternative model of development to the countries of the Global South, lest the Soviet Union would win over the bulk of their technical and political elites. The US therefore presented decentralized regional planning with a certain populist veneer that could theoretically lure these elites to American-style development. But it was precisely this evocation of regionalism which made the SPO and Turkish government balk because of concerns about Kurdish separatism.

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<sup>101</sup> John Oliver, 'Letter to the General Director of the Electrical Works Survey Administration', September 25th, 1967, in 'D&R Corporation Records (MC #014), Box 68, Folder 5, "Turkey – Keban Dam, 1963-1968' in Princeton University Library.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> ] David Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission: Modernization & the Construction of an American World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010): 105.

What even Parlar and Özal did not recognize, however, was that the historical evolution of American reclamation and hydroelectricity was also not rooted in a debate of holistically engaging in development. On the contrary, American irrigation projects enabled white homesteaders to colonize the American West and the TVA reinforced the existing racial structures in the Jim Crow South<sup>104</sup> where indigenous American communities were removed from their lands that were in the path of construction efforts. Thus the transference of one kind of development program like TVA into an entirely different context such as Turkey produced some different categories of friction and erasure. It is thus in the politics of diversion and, ultimately, of exile, on the Euphrates River where the Keban Dam begins to change substantially the relationship local inhabitants would have to the state, and to their existing communities.

Today, the reality of the dam as a kind of political chimera continues to weigh heavily on those affected by the diversion of the Euphrates. An apt metaphor can be found in writer Rob Nixon's *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Harvard, 2011), that is, 'unimagined communities'. An unimagined community is less of a location and more of a process to describe how the grand narratives of state-building embedded in structures such as dams and hydraulic infrastructure succeed in eviscerating the voices of those who happen to live in their way.<sup>105</sup> For Nixon, this erasure is not only the discursive silencing of its victims, often villagers or peasants, but also a process of material dispossession, the breaking apart of the social and cultural sinews of familiarity between a people and their land. The questions to be asked is how this term could be deployed to highlight the effects of the construction of the Keban Dam, but also, what happens to a community once it becomes 'unimagined'.

As a result of the dam's construction in the late 1960s, the Euphrates, Murat, and Karasu Rivers began to flood the low-lying valleys of the *Altınova* and *Uluova*. Turkish state officials visited the towns and villages slated for flooding, with offers of monetary compensation and replacement lodging. Ramazan Bey was all of ten-years old when his village of Hıdıroz was immersed, prompting his family to move to the city center of Elazığ. Of the 25,000 people forced to move out, Ramazan's family was fortunate to have owned among the most fertile land with lucrative cotton production. His father therefore was offered a lofty price for their land and they began to invest in a business while retaining some of their land which was not flooded to rent out to local farmers. Indeed, Ramazan recounts, not all who received such compensation from the state used it the way his father had: "What would you do," he asks, "if someone were to give you millions of liras? Some didn't know what to do and so they just spent it in the bars and *pavyon*.<sup>106</sup> There was one guy, really rich, who received something like 58 million liras! But right now his son doesn't even have any

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<sup>104</sup> Derek H. Alderman and Robert N. Brown, 'When a New Deal is Actually an Old Deal: The Role of the TVA in Engineering a Racialized Jim Crow Landscape' in Brunn, S. (eds) *Engineering Earth* (New York: Springer Publishing, 2011): 1901-16.

<sup>105</sup> Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).

<sup>106</sup> "Pavyon" is arguably the most commonly used term in discussions with villagers. It has a negative connotation of a sleazy gentlemen's club where women and wine take hold of one's wallet. Many of the poorer villagers frequented such clubs, often leading to bankruptcy and destitution.

bread to eat”. While Ramazan’s father demonstrated business acumen, he did not welcome the exchange of land for money. Indeed, in spite of their newfound wealth, Ramazan still thinks of the dam as a disaster.

Some miles north of the Keban Lake Reservoir is a large village, Çemişgezek, nestling in a series of canyons with wild fruit trees and with stone vestiges of former Armenian settlements. The villagers tell a more bitter narrative of their exodus from the submerged valleys. “We are terrorized by dams and by [PKK] terror” says a local librarian, Kağan Hoca, whose family lost their fruit orchard in the 1960s. Their new home occupies a high point with an impressive vista of the valley below, just out of sight of the reservoir. Kağan introduces his father Cemal, a man in his late 80s, steeped in the history of the district, who is placidly seated on the sofa near the window. He begins to explain why Çemişgezek historically was not – and to this day, never should have been – part of the province of Tunceli. “We were always part of Elazığ, never Tunceli,” Cemal states firmly. Both Kağan and Cemal are *milliyetçi* or Turkish nationalists like Ramazan and refer to the province by its official name of Tunceli, as opposed to the defiant usage of ‘Dersim’ by the majority Kurdish population. To a *milliyetçi*, Dersim evokes the province’s history of anti-Turkification. Cemal blames the government and the Keban Dam for making a watery grave of a prosperous orchard and for severing the ties of Çemişgezek with Elazığ. He becomes emotional as he recounts how his land was lost. Kağan decides to cut the conversation short and implores me to come with him to the office of a local businessman known as İsmail Amca at the center of the village.

İsmail is ten years younger than Cemal and, after several glasses of tea, begins to talk about his late elder brother, whom he does not wish to identify. This may be because İsmail’s brother held the unenviable honor of being deputized by the *kaymakam* (district governor) to convince his fellow villagers to sell their lands. “My elder brother was a member of one of the expropriation commissions which would go to the villages and buy the land for 25,15, or even just five Kuruş per meter. People didn’t like such money of course. A couple of lawyers came. And they opened a case to raise the price – and were successful, but the prices were still too low...What could you do against the government? We knew it would be a disaster for Çemişgezek. It had 52 villages, now we lost 22 of them. [Kurdish] terrorism started, anarchy started, and some people joined the PKK”. Despite being offered lower pay than Ramazan’s family had received, İsmail switches between viewing the dam as a benefit to Çemişgezek and regretting that it was built.



These are just samples of interviews conducted across the region. Each narrative draws out several themes. First, that while the Keban Project was seen as a project to strengthen Turkish rule over the East, the end result was the further estrangement and alienation of the very communities thought to have been ‘culturally loyal’ to the Republic. Cemal and İsmail, both Turkish



nationalists and ethnically Kurdish, saw the Keban as damaging their relationship to the state, placing even the value of compensation they received – regardless of how much was given – as secondary to their attachment to their villages, their former livelihoods. Furthermore, these accounts of grief and loss are interpolated by the interviewees with another common narrative in the East, that of ‘Kurdish terrorism’<sup>107</sup> although the Keban Dam was completed in 1974, a decade before the PKK declared war on Turkey. Perhaps large infrastructure projects such as dams are inevitably associated with political instability from the perspective of nationalist Turks.

## Churchill’s View on the Future of the Dodecanese Islands\*

by Erhun Kula,  
Professor of Economics,  
Bahçeşehir University, Istanbul



\* I am grateful to Donald Cannon for lending me six volumes of the Churchill Diaries.

In an article in the Spring 2021 issue of the *Turkish Area Studies Review*, Gül Tokay<sup>108</sup> explained the British-Ottoman position in relation to the Aegean Islands during the period between 1912 and 1914. This is a follow up article on the Dodecanese Islands emphasising events which took place during the Second World War and its immediate aftermath when the future of these islands was decided but not settled. Tokay correctly contends that the issue of the Aegean Islands has not been properly resolved either by international law or at the conference table. These islands are now a Greek territory, but some are very close to the Turkish mainland, a situation which is creating constant aggravation not only between Greece and Turkey but also between the

<sup>107</sup> The evocation of ‘terrorism’ during this period often refers to the militant actions of the PKK, although Turkish nationalists often refer to it as ‘Kurdish terrorism’.

<sup>108</sup> Gül Tokay, 2012, ‘Anglo-Ottoman Relations and the Question of the Aegean Islands 1912-14: A Reassessment’, *Turkish Area Studies Review*, No 37 (Spring 2021).



European Union and Turkey. The Greek suggestion that the territorial waters of these islands should be extended infuriates Turkey because it would substantially imprison her in the Aegean Sea and Turkey believes that it would inevitably lead to a war with Greece, a fellow NATO country.

Many believe that the Dodecanese consist of twelve islands, but in fact there are more than twenty when we count the smaller islands at the south-western corner close to Turkey. (The map on p 59 lists 14 of them) These islands should not be confused with the other Aegean islands although all were part of the Ottoman Empire for hundreds of years. The Ottomans lost the Dodecanese to Italy during the Ottoman-Italian War of 1911-12. The conflict ended with an agreement called the Ouchy Treaty by which the Ottomans agreed to withdraw from Libya and in return the Italians would do the same in the Dodecanese. But the Italians did not withdraw due to the start of Balkan War in 1912 and then the First World War in 1914 in both of which the Ottoman Empire was defeated.

After the First World War in the British Parliament there was much discussion about what to do with the Ottoman Empire. Some members including Lloyd George wanted to carve it up into various sections. Others including Churchill wanted to preserve the integrity of the Ottoman Empire as much as possible. In October 1919 Churchill, then Minister of Munitions, asked the Prime Minister Lloyd George “whether the European Powers should not, jointly and simultaneously, renounce all separate interests in the Turkish Empire other than those which existed before the war. That is to say, the Greeks should quit Smyrna, the French should give up Palestine and Mesopotamia, and the Italians should give up their sphere. Instead of dividing up the Empire into separate territorial spheres of exploitation, we should combine to preserve the integrity of the Turkish Empire as it existed before the war”.<sup>109</sup> Note that Churchill wanted Italy to give up its possessions in the Aegean which were mainly the Dodecanese to their original owner which was the Ottoman Empire. In the Lausanne Peace Treaty of July 1923, which established the borders of almost all parts of today’s Turkey, the position of the Dodecanese Islands was not determined. Italy assumed the sovereignty until the end of the Second World War despite the fact that there were very few Italian residents in these islands.

During the Second World War, in February 1943 Churchill realised that the Eastern Mediterranean was becoming important. There were a quarter of a million German and Italian troops in eastern Tunisia which had to be defeated as quickly as possible. There was also a German plan to invade Sicily which, if realised, would enhance the morale of Italians and thus it had to be prevented. After the defeat of German and Italian forces in Tunisia, Churchill was keen to follow up with an operation against enemy forces in the Dodecanese. Italian and German forces there posed a great threat to the security of Turkey. Allied forces had to be ready for an attack on the Dodecanese to support Turkey which should bring her to the Allied side.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Sean McMeekin, 2015, *The Ottoman Endgame* (London: Penguin, 2015), p. 435.

<sup>110</sup> Winston Churchill, *The Second World War* (London: Cassel & Co, 1951), volume 4, pp. 666, 708 and 839.

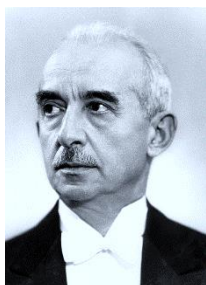
After the war there was the question about the post-war shape of Europe with new borders drawn on the basis of realities that were likely to prevail on the ground. Churchill held a number of meetings with Joseph Stalin about the borders of post-war Europe. Stalin argued that the Dodecanese should be a part of Turkey. "Turkey should receive the Dodecanese, with possible adjustment in favour of Greece as regards islands in the Aegean important to Greece. Turkey might also receive certain district in Bulgaria"<sup>111</sup>, Stalin also made claims on the Baltic states saying that they should be integrated into the Soviet Union. Churchill did not object to the Turkish possession of the Dodecanese but strongly opposed the Soviet integration of the Baltic States. Stalin did not specify which parts of Bulgaria should be given to Turkey. He was probably thinking of southern Bulgaria where there was a very large Pomak (a native Muslim Slavic people) and Turkish population. Stalin had wanted to punish Bulgaria because the Bulgarians had fought on the side of the Axis Powers. If, during the war, Bulgaria had attacked Turkey together with Germany Stalin had made it clear that he was ready to send the Red Army to Bulgaria in defence of Turkey.<sup>112</sup>

Germany had air superiority over the Aegean and so they were able to fly in their troops to the Dodecanese. Churchill and Stalin wanted to put a stop to this. The only way this could be achieved was to persuade Turkey to give the Allies airfields in Western Anatolia. In return for this Stalin promised to invite Turkey to the Peace Conference at the end of the War where Turkey could claim the Dodecanese. Prime Minister İnönü, fearing a German retaliation, declined to give the Allies airstrips in Western Anatolia.

Italian and German troops remained in the Dodecanese until the end of the Second World War. Although the Turkish population of the islands was largely unmolested about 6000 Jews were murdered by the Germans. Some 1000 Jews escaped to the nearby Turkish mainland.

The fate of the Dodecanese Islands was sealed with the Paris Peace Treaty of 1947 in which the victorious Allied Powers worked out the details of post-war settlements with Axis countries such as Italy, Finland, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary. Italy was told to cede the Dodecanese to Greece who would have sovereign control but could not militarise the islands.

Because Turkey had largely stayed outside the Second World War it was not formally invited to the Paris meetings and thus did not sign the Treaty. Even if Turkey had been invited, İnönü believed that -it would not be given much if anything at all because, despite the insistence of the Allies, Turkey did not join the war on the Allied side until the last few months. In my opinion, if Atatürk had been alive Turkey would have secured sovereignty of a number of islands especially those closer to its mainland. Greece, on the other hand, as part of the Allied forces, was in Paris to benefit from the spoils of the war.



<sup>111</sup> Winston Churchill, *The Second World War* (London: Cassel & Co, 1950) volume 3, p. 558.

<sup>112</sup> Winston Churchill, *The Second World War* (London: Cassel and Co.1952) Volume 5 pp.345-47.

The loss of the Dodecanese is still a sour point in Turkey. Mustafa Armağan points out that Britain, through its ambassador in Ankara, requested the Turkish government to attend the Paris Conference. The ambassador believed that it would probably not be possible for Turkey to acquire all the islands, but some of them might – which would be important for Turkey's security. The Turkish government did not respond to this. Later, the British ambassador made a second attempt to persuade Turkey to attend the conference by saying that the Turks had been residing in these islands for hundreds of years. Still no application was made by Turkey to attend.<sup>113</sup> İnönü stated that “*Since we were out of the Second World War, we do not have the right to take a share from the spoils of the war*”<sup>114</sup>.

In June 2021 the Turkish Defence Minister Hulusi Akar accused Greece of militarising 16 out of 23 islands in the Aegean, including some of the Dodecanese. According to Akar this was against the treaties of Lausanne and Paris. Greece argued that she has the right to militarise her own sovereign islands and also will extend their territorial waters from 6 to 12 miles under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Akar insisted that since Turkey was not a party to the Law of the Sea Convention, if Greece extended her territorial waters to 12 miles this would lead to a war and possibly Turkish occupation of some of these islands which are important for Turkey's security.<sup>115</sup> Unfortunately, the Dodecanese remains a thorn in the side of Turkey, the European Union and NATO. I do not think that the problems created by the 1947 Paris Treaty will be resolved in the near future.

## Noteworthy Events

compiled by Ayşe Tuğrul Colebourne

### SEMINARS

**Seminars on Turkey**, free and open to all unless indicated otherwise, (possibly starting ‘in person’ from the Autumn Term)

Organisers The SOAS Modern Turkish Studies Programme (London Middle East Institute, SOAS). **Convened** by Yorgos Dedes & Gamon McLellan

**Sponsor:** Nurol Bank

**Times:** Fridays 12:00pm-2:00pm

**Venue:** MBI Al Jaber Seminar Room, MBI Al Jaber Building, 21 Russell Square, SOAS (unless stated otherwise)

**More information: Web:** <https://www.soas.ac.uk/smei/events/turkey/>

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<sup>113</sup> Armağan Mustafa, [www.mustafaarmagan.com.tr/12-ada-yunanlilara-nasil-verildi](http://www.mustafaarmagan.com.tr/12-ada-yunanlilara-nasil-verildi)

<sup>114</sup> İnönü Vakfı. [www.ismetinonu.org.tr/12-adalar-elimizden-nasil-cikti](http://www.ismetinonu.org.tr/12-adalar-elimizden-nasil-cikti)

<sup>115</sup> Ahval, [ahvalnews.com/turkey-greece/turkey-calls-greece-demilitarise-islands](http://ahvalnews.com/turkey-greece/turkey-calls-greece-demilitarise-islands).

## CONCERTS

### Free LUNCHTIME recitals

Organiser: Talent Unlimited, Contact: [canan@talent-unlimited.org.uk](mailto:canan@talent-unlimited.org.uk)

**Venue:** St James's Church, Piccadilly, London

**Web:** <http://www.talent-unlimited.org.uk>

**Date and time:** Wednesdays 24 August and 14 September, 13.00

Programme and details: TBA

### Talent Unlimited EVENING Concerts

Evening concerts are £20.00 for adults and £5.00 for students booked in advance (no ticket sales at the door).

**Date and time:** Friday 7 April at 19.00

St James's Church, 197 Piccadilly, London



**Date and time:** Saturday 21 May at 19.00

St James's Church, Sussex Gardens, Paddington W2 3UD

**Programmes and details:** TBA

**Contact:** [canan@talent-unlimited.org.uk](mailto:canan@talent-unlimited.org.uk)

**Web:** <http://www.talent-unlimited.org.uk>

## ONLINE DOCUMENTARY and PODCASTS

### BBC Radio 4

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m00132tq>

### Crossing Continents: - Turkey's Crazy Project

Plans for a new international shipping lane through Istanbul have been dubbed 'crazy' by Turkey's president, who thought it up – and by his opponents. Will the project go ahead?

### Ottoman History podcasts

A podcast about the Ottoman Empire, the modern Middle East, and the Islamic world

**More information:** About Us  
([ottomanhistorypodcast.com](http://ottomanhistorypodcast.com))

The Making of the Islamic World ([ottomanhistorypodcast.com](http://ottomanhistorypodcast.com))



## MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS

The British Museum:

### Life in a cup: coffee culture in the Islamic world

**Dates:** 27 October 2021 – 18 September 2022

**Venue:** Room 43a The Albukhary Foundation Gallery of the Islamic world  
Great Russell Street London WC1B 3DG

**Tickets:** Free entry but booking required

**More information:** <https://www.britishmuseum.org/exhibitions/life-cup-coffee-culture-islamic-world>

## Spotlight Loan; Troy: beauty and heroism

### Venues, dates, and times:

**Haslemere** Educational Museum, Surrey  
78 High Street, Haslemere, Surrey GU27 2LA

Tuesdays to Saturdays 10:00am – 5:00pm  
10 February – 7 May 2022

### More information:

<https://www.haslemeremuseum.co.uk/whatson/whatson.html#bookmark5>

The **McManus**: Dundee's Art Gallery and Museum  
Albert Square, Meadowside Dundee DD1 1DA  
Mondays to Saturdays 10.00am - 5.00pm; Sundays 12.30pm - 4.30pm

19 May – 14 August 2022

**More information:** <https://www.mcmanus.co.uk/>

**General information:** <https://www.britishmuseum.org/exhibitions/troy-beauty-and-heroism>

## COURSES

### Turkish Course for A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2

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

**Dates:** 15 February 2022 for 15 weeks then starts again

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

**Link:** [londra@yee.org.tr](mailto:londra@yee.org.tr) -- *These courses will be taught on Zoom*



## Subscription Reminder

Current BATAS subscription rates for the different membership categories still apply in 2022, and these may be checked by referring to the Membership page on our website. UK members who pay by Standing Order are kindly asked to ensure that their payments are made at the appropriate levels, and payment by BACS bank transfer is also welcomed. Further information, including details of the BATAS bank account if needed, is available on application from the Treasurer (contact details on back page).

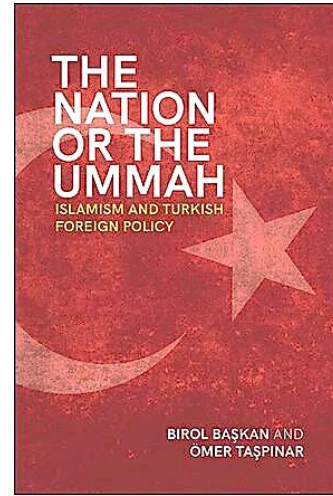


**Books**

## The Nation or the Ummah: Islamism and Turkish Foreign Policy

by **Birol Başkan** and **Ömer Taşpınar**

Albany NY, SUNY Press, 2021.  
212 + x pp. Bibliography, Index  
. ISBN 978-1-4384-8647-5



The appearance of yet another book on Turkish foreign policy should not come as a surprise. After many years of virtual neglect, the subject has suddenly come alive. Since the end of the Cold War, Turkey has been seen as having a greatly enhanced international role in the Middle East, south-eastern Europe, and East-West relations generally. Academic studies have followed this perception. What makes this book original is that, rather than giving us another general survey, it tries to explain and analyse Turkish policy since the 1990s in terms of two alternative paradigms, the nation-state, and the *umma* (*ümmet* in Turkish) – the world-wide community of Muslim believers. In international relations theory, this can be identified as parallel to the debate between the ‘realist’ or ‘neorealist’ schools of thought on the one hand, which posit that ‘international politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power’. and the ‘constructivist’ school, which argues that beliefs, culture, and ideology (which, for present purposes could include religion) are also fundamental to foreign policy construction. In developing their theme, Başkan and Taşpınar give us plenty to think about, even if their argument is not entirely convincing, and sometimes drifts off the point.

The book starts with an account of Turkish foreign policy during the 1990s, when Turkey’s politics were in a state of highly unstable flux. Islamism, the writers suggest, was generally rejected as a foreign policy principle, being replaced by prudence and ‘constructive engagement’ (p.14) – a general guideline, which was continued under the AKP, up to the start of the ‘Arab spring’ in 2011. They are critical of the Kemalist reflex to the rise of religious conservatism, with the military’s hard-line approach to the Kurdish question, the emergence of an anti-Western element leading to ‘Eurasianism’ (briefly, alignment with Russia and maybe China) and the paradoxical adoption of the ‘Turkish-Islamic synthesis’ as a supposed weapon against the left in domestic politics. During his brief tenure of power in 1996-7, Necmettin Erbakan launched a poorly planned attempt to promote pan-Islamism, but this collapsed after the so-called ‘soft coup’ of May-June 1997. Unfortunately, the writers tell

very little about foreign policy under the succeeding administrations of Mesut Yılmaz (1997-9) and Bülent Ecevit (1999-2002), although these included the dramatic reconciliation with Syria following Hafiz al-Assad's expulsion of the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in October 1998, the Helsinki meeting of the European Council of December 1999 at which Turkey was admitted as a candidate for EU membership, and Foreign Minister İsmail Cem's determined campaign for a reconciliation with Greece during 2000-2002. None of these seem to fit into a 'nation vs. *ummah*' concept of Turkish foreign policy.

In both domestic politics and foreign policy, the story of the AKP governments since 2002 breaks fairly neatly into two periods, with the watershed in 2011-12. During the first phase, the writers argue, foreign policy was 'a delicate balance between Kemalism and Ottomanism' which was 'not overtly Islamist' (p.57). 'Ottomanism' – more commonly, 'neo-Ottomanism' – is hard to define. On one level, it referred to the idea of a multi-ethnic national identity, which could accept that of the Kurds and other minorities. More controversially, it might stand for some sort of reconstruction of the Ottoman territorial state (an idea, which it should be noted, Ahmet Davutoğlu, as Foreign Minister, vigorously rejected in 2009). More modestly, it could mean that Turkey should be more active in the former Ottoman space, stretching from the Balkans to the Middle East and North Africa. In practice, Davutoğlu's programme of 'zero problems with neighbours' had little to do with Islamism, and aimed to embrace the states of the Balkans and Transcaucasia as well as the Middle East.

The 'Arab spring' began in 2010-11 with uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria. This coincided with internal developments which brought about the emasculation of the Turkish military in the 'Ergenekon' trials of 2009-11, Erdoğan's break with the Gülen movement in 2012, and the AKP's later drift towards the authoritarian presidential system which continues today. Of the various Arab revolutions, that in Egypt was closest to the Islamist trend, as Tayyip Erdoğan formed a close alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood, signaled by a hero's welcome he received when he visited Cairo in September 2011. What the writers refer to as the 'Islamist hubris' of the AKP also developed as support for the opposition to Bashar al-Assad's dictatorship in Syria, which began in the autumn of 2011, albeit after some hesitation and repeated attempts to persuade Assad to give way to the demands for reform. In Libya, where Turkey had acquired important economic benefits from Qaddafi's regime, Turkey first opposed the NATO intervention in support of his opponents, before changing its tune by supporting the operation. Tunisia did not figure high on Turkey's political agenda, nor did the conflicts in Bahrain or the Yemen. The remaining Islamist plank in Tayyip Erdoğan's foreign policy platform was his support for Hamas as rulers of the Gaza strip – not extensively dealt with in this book – but this had as much to do with sympathy with Palestinian national rights as political Islamism, and long pre-dated the 'Arab spring'.

By the summer of 2013, following the Egyptian coup which placed General al-Sisi in power, the 'Arab spring' was effectively over, with the collapse of Syria and Libya into civil war, and the reinforcing of conservative power in the Gulf by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. In Syria, Turkey was dragged into a quagmire by its alliance with Sunni-Islamist forces in the north, but its

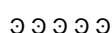
intervention was apparently driven more by its opposition to the pro-PKK Kurdish militia in Syria and broader strategic concerns than Islamist ideology.

In their penultimate chapter, Başkan and Taşpınar change subjects by giving us a thoughtful account of Ahmet Davutoğlu's proposals for closer relations with the Middle East, and the ideas developed in his dissertation-turned-book, *Alternative Paradigms*.<sup>116</sup> Sandwiched in between is a 25-page summary of the development of Turkish Islamism since the nineteenth century. This is an informative account, valuable for anyone seeking a short guide to the subject. Unfortunately, it tells us very little about recent Turkish foreign policy. Nor is there anything on the more recent trends, which have seen the abandonment of Islamism as a foreign policy determinant. This has included the restoration of Turkey's relations with Egypt and even Israel, besides a rapprochement with Saudi Arabia. Even for President Erdoğan, the nation (or, if you prefer, pragmatism) appears to have triumphed over the *ummah*.

This conclusion underlines a major shortcoming of this book – its failure to live up to its title. Viewed realistically, the *ummah*, including as it does the global Muslim community, from Indonesia to Nigeria, has never been the focus of Turkish foreign policy, except for the brief period under Necmettin Erbakan, which ended in fiasco. Admittedly, Turkey has been attached to the Organisation of the Islamic Conference since 1969, but this has never been much more than a talking shop. Even under the supposedly Islamist aegis of the AKP, foreign policy has been an eclectic mixture of pragmatism, material interests and ideology – nationalist as much as Islamist. Like others, AKP governments have used Islamism when it suited them, and dropped it when it did not – in, for instance, their vital relationships with the US, the EU and Russia, to say nothing of their latest foray into sub-Saharan Africa. Başkan and Taşpınar have given us a well-written and impeccably documented survey, but their overall argument is hard to follow.

**William Hale**

Emeritus Professor, SOAS, London



### **A few Readers' reactions to No 38**

I have looked at the contents of TASR no 38 and would like to say that it is of excellent quality. This is an awesome compilation for which you deserve hearty congratulations!

What a wonderful issue, just took a quick look. Congratulations. As always.

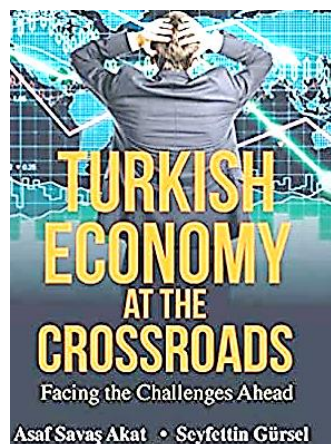
What a wonderful publication! I am looking forward to reading it cover to cover; there are so many interesting pieces! My congratulations to you.

Thanks for this very impressive and highly relevant BATAS 38.

It is very impressive and full of well-informed articles about current Turkish politics, late Ottoman culture etc.

Just a quick line to tell you how much I am enjoying the latest BATAS review. It's so interesting to read such lively and informative articles written by experts in their field. I particularly enjoy the political articles, which give so much insight into current events in Turkey.

<sup>116</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Alternative Paradigms: The Impact of Islamic and Western Weltanschauungs on Political Theory* (Lanham, University Press of America, 1994).



## Turkish Economy at the Crossroads Facing the Challenges Ahead

by **Asaf Savaş Akat & Seyfettin Gürsel** (eds)  
World Scientific Publishing, 2021  
ISBN: 978-9811214882

*Turkish Economy at the Crossroads* was finalised in December 2019, just prior to the onset of the covid epidemic. It was also before the December gyrations of the Turkish Lira and accelerating inflation following the 500 basis point cuts in policy rates since September 2021 by the Central Bank of Turkey (CBT). The editors and contributors are established long-time economic and political analysts who provide a sombre view of the past two decades of AKP rule. The two editors also have experience beyond academia: Asaf Savaş Akat of Istanbul Bilgi University is a co-founder of a liberal political party (New Democracy Movement – YDH) while Seyfettin Gürsel of Bahçeşehir University is a Founding Director of its think tank, BETAM, Centre for Economic and Social Research.

The overall themes of the book are mostly not new, presenting work that the authors have published previously. But collecting them in a single volume makes their arguments that much more cogent. The analysis begins by examining the parameters of the strong productivity led growth in 2002-2007. In Chapter 2, Daron Acemoğlu, Professor at MIT and influential author on the role of institutions in economic development, and Murat Uçer, of Koç University and former economist at the IMF, argue that it was the institutional and political reforms implemented after the 2001 crisis that brought macro-stability and paved the way for this growth spurt. They show the close relationship between democratic reforms and productivity led, high-quality growth. These are the early years of the AKP when an IMF programme and the prospect of EU membership provided constraints and incentives to the government to pursue what are deemed as orthodox neo-liberal economic policies.

But it was not to last. The AKP in its bid to consolidate power, began to chip away at the autonomy of institutions including several independent regulatory entities established after the 2001 crisis to reduce political meddling and corruption of the 1990s. The government also began to shed its economic policy constraints after the end of the IMF stand-by programme, while also adopting an authoritarian response to domestic political challenges. Some of the pivotal political moments were the 2013 Gezi protests, the failed-coup in 2016 and emergency rule that followed, and the Constitutional referendum that established the Presidential system in 2017.

In his historical overview in Chapter 1, Şevket Pamuk, an economic historian at Bosphorus University and former Chair of Turkish Studies at the London School



of Economics, chillingly notes that even though ‘political and economic institutions in Turkey were not particularly strong in the earlier periods, ...they have declined further during the latter years of the AK Parti era’.<sup>117</sup> This was because the party has been in power longer than any other since WWII and, during this time, there were several legislative changes that modified the relationship between government-private sector relations with ‘mechanisms...to create a new layer of conservative business men that would support the Islamist political project of the AK Parti and its leader’.<sup>118</sup>

This ‘second period’ of AKP rule coincided with a slowing growth momentum and loss of coherence of economic policies. The appreciation of the Lira had begun to undermine export growth, increase import dependence, and widen the current account deficit. The global financial crisis of 2008-09 exposed these vulnerabilities. The government policy response was a credit-led, ‘low-quality growth’ that became increasingly difficult to sustain after the 2013 ‘Taper tantrum’ (when the US Federal Reserve began to ‘taper’ its monetary stimulus) which reduced international capital flows to emerging markets.

Chapter 3, by Isak Atiyas and Ozan Bakış and Chapter 5, by Öner Güncavdi and Ayşe Aylin Bayar, examine the structural changes in the economy during the ‘second period’ of AKP rule. This ‘low-quality’ credit and construction driven growth was led by the rise of the non-tradeable (services) sectors that were more amenable to domestic policy directives. Export-led growth had become difficult with Turkish goods unable to compete with China and other East Asian exporters as globalisation progressed in the 2000s. As the contribution to growth from industry began to wane, a ‘pre-mature’ de-industrialisation trend emerged with investment and consumption increasingly reliant on imports. Although some services sectors, such as tourism, health, transport, and contractors’ services, had an export element, these proved volatile and were unable to offset the growing deficit on the trade balance – leading to increased reliance on portfolio inflows and foreign debt to fund the current account deficits.

In the last two chapters on the political outlook for Turkey, both Cengiz Aktar who, as Chair of European Studies at Bahçeşehir University, had successfully campaigned for Istanbul to be chosen the European Capital of Culture in 2010, and Atilla Yeşilada, a consultant to Global Source, and a well-known trenchant commentator, underline the current critical point reached by the AKP which, they warn, is ‘sailing into uncharted waters’. This proved prophetic as, after the book was published, the Turkish economy was hit by the impact of the Covid epidemic in 2020 and AKP’s ‘new economic model’ in 2021. Even the cautious and downbeat outlook they presented in 2019 did not quite envisage how, since September 2021, with the Presidential control over the CBT consolidated, thereby ending any semblance of its independence, the unprecedented currency volatility in December and inflation levels last seen in the 1990s would return (see in this *Review*, pp.16-21: ‘Turkish Economy Review’).

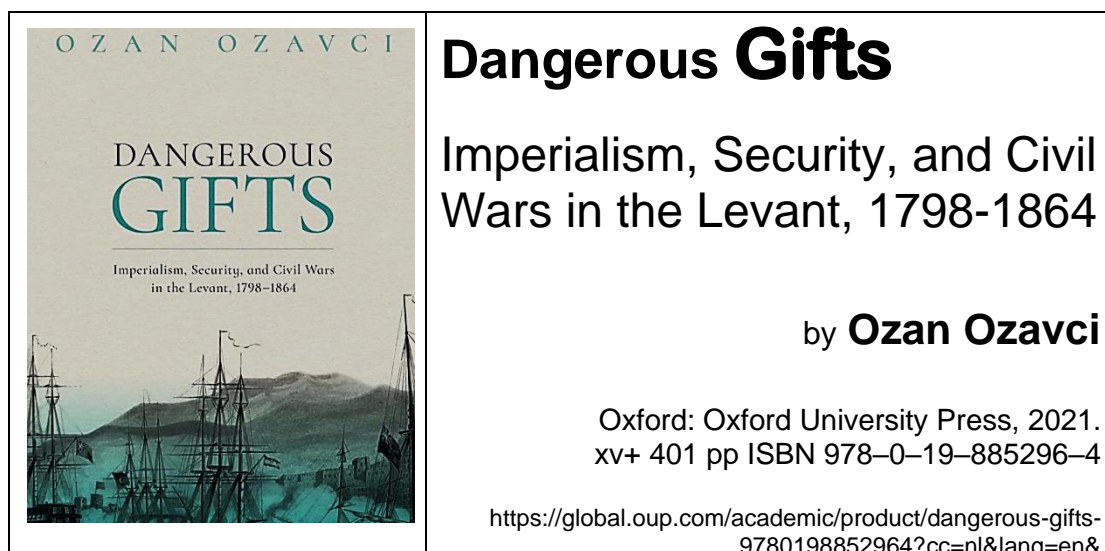
Mina Toksöz  
University of Manchester Business School.

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<sup>117</sup> Şevket Pamuk, ‘Economic Policies, Institutional Change, and Economic Growth since 1980’, p31.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, p31.





## Dangerous Gifts

Imperialism, Security, and Civil Wars in the Levant, 1798-1864

by **Ozan Ozavci**

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.  
xv+ 401 pp ISBN 978-0-19-885296-4

<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/dangerous-gifts-9780198852964?cc=nl&lang=en&>

Fouad Ajami, in his book *The Foreigner's Gift: The Americans, the Arabs and the Iraqis in Iraq*<sup>119</sup> promoted the occupation of Iraq by the United States. According to Ajami, it was now the United States' moment in Iraq and its driving motivation should be 'modernising the Arab world'. He referred to the occupation as a legitimate 'imperial mission,' 'a foreigner's gift' to the Iraqi inhabitants. (p 366) In *Dangerous Gifts*, Ozavci tells us how foreign power involvement in the Middle East in the 20th century is no different than that of the 19th century, when the self-defined Great Powers (Austria-Hungary, Britain, France, Prussia, and Russia) had assumed responsibility, either individually or collectively, for supplying security in the region even when the sovereign authority was opposed to their intervention. He proceeds to show the reader how, from the late eighteenth century, the threat perceptions and interests of the Western Powers and Levantine inhabitants became interwoven.

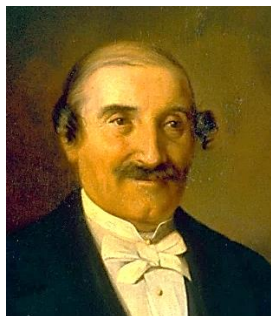
Although interventions in the Middle East did not begin in 1798, Ozavci starts his book with Napoleon Bonaparte's occupation of Egypt in 1798 because it symbolises the beginning of intensified inter-imperial rivalries in the Levant until the early twentieth century. The Great Powers, which at the time had different interests and rivalries, were coming to realise that strategic cooperation was the only means to ensure European security while maximising global imperial interests. They had to act together, making concessions where they can for a greater good. Also beginning with this invasion, they came to assume the right to supply security in the Middle East for the 'benefit' of the locals. The invasion carried with it the arrogance of Enlightenment thought on the part of the Powers: that enlightenment can be taught to others, and it can be used to civilise others. However, they failed to see the local realities and complex dynamics. Before the French invasion, Egypt had already been in turmoil and was suffering persistent civil wars, and the invasion only heightened existing hostilities. The book draws many parallels with the more recent American invasion of Iraq post 9/11 for regime change. In 1798 there were some natives who welcomed this 'gift' from the West as well, like Fouad Ajami.

<sup>119</sup> Ajami, Fouad. *The Foreigner's Gift: The Americans, the Arabs and the Iraqis in Iraq* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

Ozavci gives a detailed account of the Ottoman Empire's struggles with Mehmet Ali Pasha, the governor of Egypt. The reader cannot help but feel sorry for the Sultans, who had to deal with the governor, and the role of Mehmet Ali in the downfall of the Empire becomes very clear. Mehmet Ali made use of the Napoleonic Wars politically (he managed to remain in power), economically (he made immense profits by selling grain and other agricultural products to warring European Powers), and he built on reforms introduced under the French rule in 1798-1801. After the war he recruited former-French officers (from Bonaparte's disbanded armies) to help him reform his own army, navy, and bureaucracy. His aim was to expand his rule and control Syria with his more advanced army because he considered the Taurus Mountains a natural defence line to his dominions. Meanwhile the Ottoman elites such as the Ottoman ambassador to Paris, Mehmed Said Halet Efendi (1761–1822), had already been in disagreement with the policies of the Sultan when Mehmed Ali Paşa rose against the Ottoman Empire in 1831-2. (p. 106-12). This was followed by the Russian intervention in 1833, which pulled in other Powers: France supporting Cairo, and the rest supporting Istanbul. Meanwhile the civil war and sectarian violence in Mount Lebanon continued and the Great Powers intervened there in 1840.



In the section of the book, which is devoted to Lebanon and its history, Ozavci gives in detail how over the years sectarianism was already an important aspect of inter-elite, and the class struggles before the *Tanzimat* and finally the 1840 intervention. We read about Richard Wood, the Ottoman/British agent who arrived in Lebanon and distributed arms to the Christians of the region, who were traditionally under French protection. He was then appointed as the British Consul in Damascus where he would play a key mediating role between local and Ottoman authorities during the Maronite-Druze wars in 1842 and 1845. In late 1840 and early 1841, after Ottoman rule was restored in Syria, for about six months, Wood was very influential. French agents in Syria reported back to Paris, that Wood was acting like the 'de facto governor general of Syria'. (p.246) Ozavci claims that the semi-autonomous administrative model implemented in Mount Lebanon in 1864 inspired the administrative model introduced through the mediation of Great Powers in Crete by 1869. Then again during the 1910s, when a civil war broke out between the Armenians and the Kurds in eastern Anatolia, the Powers intervened diplomatically, and again took their inspiration from the Lebanese experience.



The Eastern Question provides the framework of the book, and Ozavci gives an account of the dynamic evolution of the term over the years. After the 1789 revolution, it referred to the French expansionism in the Levant. In the 1810s, it was a matter of placing the Ottoman empire under the guarantee of European public law in order to address Russo-Ottoman differences. At the time, before

the term Eastern Question was coined, the Vienna order <sup>120</sup> held the rivalries between Powers in check and the Eastern Question referred mostly to the Russian plans for the partition of the Ottoman Empire. In the 1820s, it referred to the diplomatic quandary over the 'Greek crisis'. A decade later it was used in relation to suppressing a civil war in the Ottoman world that had enabled Russia to establish dominant control over the Porte. And then, in the 1840s, it was repurposed as an issue of 'civilisation' to be dealt with globally. (p10) By late 1855-6, the Ottoman Empire became financially dependent on European banks and syndicates. It becomes clear that the history of the financial colonisation of the Middle East began not in the post-World War II Middle East after the independence of various colonies, but with the financial turn of the Eastern Question. Finally, in 1922-3, with the Lausanne Peace Treaty, which marked the end of the Ottoman Empire and the end of the World War I for the Middle East, the Eastern Question was laid to rest.

What differentiates Ozavci's book from similar works is the crucial question he poses and his answer to this question: in the history of the Middle East, were the roles played by the locals themselves only those of 'bargaining chips', 'junior partners in the power game', or 'troublemakers'? We barely read about 'the lives, ideas, emotions and threat perceptions, and interests of Levantines themselves' and therefore perhaps we should pay 'particular attention to the part that the local actors played in enabling interventionism and in the production of violence in the Levant.' (p4) The detailed accounts of the Ottoman imperial subjects, both in the Porte and outside, and power struggles and differences of opinion among them show that the men of power began to seek the aid of one or more of the Great Powers against their rival pashas or their Ottoman overlords. The struggle and fights among these locals were heightened by Great Power involvement creating an ever-increasing demand for security in the Middle East. Hence, the book is also very much about the local actors at the Porte such as Hüsrev Paşa, the Sultan's *serasker* (the Ottoman equivalent of Minister of War), a personal enemy of Mehmet Ali of Egypt, or Mustafa Reşid Paşa, one of the architects of the Gülhane Edict that ushered in the Tanzimat reforms, and Sultan Mahmud II's son-in-law Said Paşa, as well as their followers and colleagues. The book follows these actors taking the side of different foreign powers as well as their struggles with each other. Using primary sources and by placing the events in the Ottoman Empire onto a larger world stage, Ozavci helps us to understand and interpret important events like the Gülhane Edict, and the introduction of the concept of civilisation (*medeniyet*) to the Empire. The term 'civilisation' was coined and systematically invoked in international political thought after the French and Scottish Enlightenment in the second half of the eighteenth century. It was translated as 'medeniyet' in Ottoman Turkish political lexicology, and introduced first in an editorial of the official newspaper *Takvim-i Vekayi* (The Chronicle of Events), and then with Reşid's letters from Paris to Istanbul in the 1830 following its

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<sup>120</sup> During the peace negotiations in Paris in March and May 1814, "the leading empires – Austria, Britain, Prussia, Russia, and later France – came to officially style themselves as a separate category, 'the Great Powers', and introduced new hierarchies into international politics on the continent. Nearly a century before the formation of the League of Nations, the five claimed managerial responsibilities to form an exclusive security system, the Congress of Vienna system, which aimed at precluding a return to the horrors of the Napoleonic Wars that had devastated Europe in the past three decades". p107

usage in French political thought. By the 1850s 'medeniyetçilik' (civilisationism) emerged as a semi-official ideology of the Ottoman Empire. (p184)

**Dangerous Gifts** is divided into three parts:

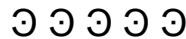
Part I, 'Avant le mot', discusses the beginnings of Great Power interventions in the eighteenth century under the shadow of the unfolding Eastern Question.

Part II, 'The Invention of the Eastern Question' scrutinises the implications of the formation of the Vienna Order in Europe for the Levant at the time when the term 'Eastern Question' was coined and gradually became prevalent in international political parlance.

In Part III, 'The Mountain', the author gives a detailed history of Lebanon (Mount Lebanon). Through the story of the Jumblatts, a Druze family that had lived through wars and violence in the Levant for centuries, it considers how the intervention changed the lives of the Lebanese themselves.

Ozan Ozavci<sup>121</sup> uses an extensive number of primary sources from the Russian, American, English, Scottish, Turkish, Egyptian archives, including embassy letters, official and private correspondence. He follows the events from the perspectives of different agents through the use of these primary sources, moving the reader gradually from 1798 to the end of the 19th century, before turning to the 20th century in the Epilogue. The thirty page select bibliography (p371-401) also contains practically every secondary source on the subject.

**Çiğdem Balım**  
Indiana University



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Savaş, Ayşegül. *White on White*. (Riverhead Books, 2021). ISBN: 978-0593330517.  
Dinç, Enis. *Atatürk on Screen: Documentary Film and the Making of a Leader*. (I.B. Tauris, 2020). ISBN: 978-0755602032.

<sup>121</sup> Dr Ozan Ozavci is Assistant Professor of Transimperial History at Utrecht University, and an associate member at the Centre d'Études Turques, Ottomanes, Balkaniques et Centrasiatiques (CETOBaC, UMR 8032) in Paris. He is one of the convenors of the Lausanne Project. <https://thelausanneproject.com> In 2023, a conference will be organised in London for the launch of the edited volume containing the contributions of the members of the project.



## HISTORY

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Khan, Yasmin. *Ripe Figs: Recipes and Stories from Turkey, Greece, and Cyprus*. (W.W. Norton and Company, 2021). ISBN: 978-1324006657.

**Compiled by Arın Bayraktaroğlu**



**Professor Belma Ötüş-Baskett** has been honoured by a Festschrift entitled *Engin Bir Ufuk Boyunca/Across a Broad Horizon\** containing 460 pages offering no fewer than 72 contributions from colleagues and friends on the occasion of her 90th birthday. With some in Turkish and some in English, this eclectic mix of academic articles, reminiscences and literary pieces reflects Belma's achievements and the places she has known and the people she has encountered. Belma very successfully edited the first ten issues of this new series of *TAS Review* (2003-07) and continues to be a supporter of BATAS.

\*Edited by Gönül Pultar and Louis Mazzari (Istanbul: Levent Baskı Merkezi, 2021, 487 pages, ISBN: 978-605-66450-1-3)

**Opportunity to co-edit the Turkish Area Studies  
Review**

Dear BATAS member

As you will be aware, *TAS Review* plays an essential part in BATAS's work of disseminating knowledge and understanding of the Turkish, Turkic and Ottoman worlds, providing a voice for a wide range of scholarship and expertise as well as lived experience, observation and artistic interpretation. The co-editors have great scope for creativity in introducing new features, new lines of enquiry, new approaches to the exploration of this fascinatingly rich country, its worldwide links and its past.

One of our two current co-editors, Gareth Winrow, is leaving us to concentrate on his own writing, and we are therefore looking for a person or persons to take his place. The other co-editor, Sigi Martin, is staying on, and her long years of experience of all the administrative and practical dimensions of the *Review's* production will make it very straightforward for a new colleague or colleagues to orient themselves into their role. The main responsibility of the new co-editor(s) will be to commission articles, to assess the suitability of material that is offered and if necessary to suggest to authors what changes they may need to make. (Assistance with copy-editing and proofreading is available from a team of volunteers.)

I list below the qualities that we regard as necessary for the role:

- a wide circle of contacts in "Turkish Area Studies" as understood by BATAS, including some of the following fields: academia, journalism, think tanks, NGOs, business, the arts, literature
- willingness to approach these contacts proactively to ask them to contribute to the *Review*
- some personal experience of writing/publishing and knowledge of the relevant conventions
- native-speaker-equivalent command of English

Knowledge of Turkish is not essential but would be an added benefit.

If you would like to apply for the role, or to find out more about it, please email me ([celiakerslake4@gmail.com](mailto:celiakerslake4@gmail.com)) with a brief CV and a statement of your vision for the future of the *Review*. Like all BATAS offices, the Co-editorships are unremunerated, but they carry *ex officio* membership of BATAS Council, giving the person(s) appointed a voice in the wider planning of BATAS's activities and future direction.

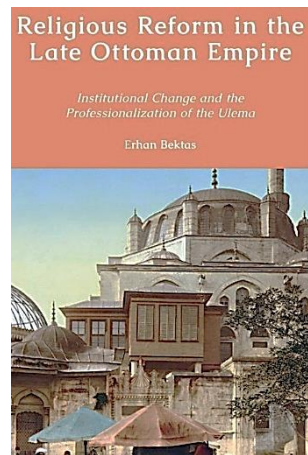
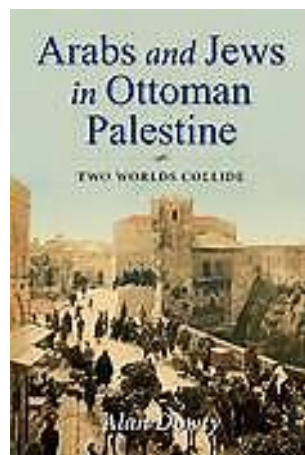
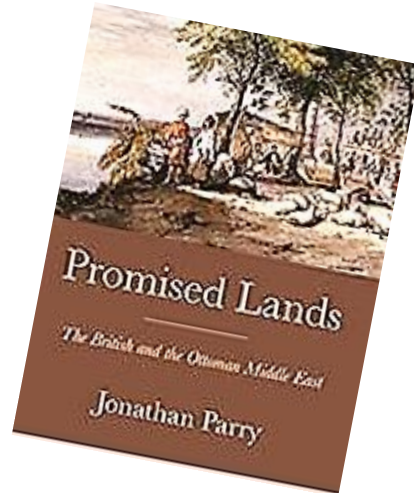
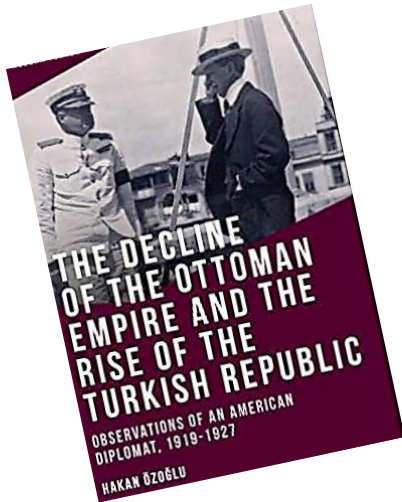
Celia Kerslake  
Chair of BATAS

# Request for contributions

TAS *Review* welcomes articles, features, reviews, announcements and news from private individuals as well as those representing universities and other relevant institutions. Submissions may range from 250 to 2500 words and should be in A4 format and, preferably, sent electronically to the Co-Editors at [bayraktaroglu@btinternet.com](mailto:bayraktaroglu@btinternet.com) and/or [sigimartin3@gmail.com](mailto:sigimartin3@gmail.com). Submissions for the Autumn issue would be particularly welcomed by 1 September 2022 or earlier.



Random suggestions from the Book List, reminiscent of the main topic featuring in the BATAS Symposium and the John Martin Lecture 2021



# BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR TURKISH AREA STUDIES

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