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BATAS

Book Launch

Kellogg College, Oxford

60-62 Banbury Road, Oxford, Kellogg Hub OX2 6PN

‘Women, Work and Mobilities’

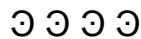
by Dr Nihan Akyelken

Associate Professor in Sustainable Urban Development

Tuesday 11 June 2024

17.30 to 18.30

https://www.eventbrite.com/e/book-launch-women-work-and-mobilities-by-dr-nihan-akyelken-tickets-890300000267?aff=ebdssbdestsearch&keep_tld=1



The 2024 John Martin Lecture

Friday 29 November 2024

Venue and speaker to be confirmed (via Eventbrite)



BATAS Webinars - Online

Professor Mustafa Özbilgin

LGBT inclusion in hostile and supportive contexts

June date to be confirmed



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

Editorial

The Co-editors – with the help of a very reliable group of contributors and proof-readers – are very pleased to be able to present this *Review* No 43. BATAS is going through tough times, and it is thanks to dedicated voluntary members, some of them with demanding jobs to contend with, that BATAS as always forges ahead. We have sadly taken the difficult decision to cancel the symposium this year, but it will be back next year stronger with everyone's support. In the meantime, you will receive all essential information at the next AGM (13 September by zoom), so try not to miss that. But now you will hear something about the contents of this edition.

2023 being the centenary of the Turkish Republic, the *Review* offers three contributions to mark this event. The '2023 John Martin Lecture' was dedicated to the Centenary. It took place on 17 November with the collaboration of the London School of Economics and with the support of one of our Council members who holds the Chair for Turkish Studies there, Yaprak Gürsoy, who chaired the lecture on *A Centennial Reflection* by Şule Kut (Boğazici and Binghampton Universities), eminent professor of International Relations & Political Science.

There have been a few books published in 2023 in honour of the Centenary and Çiğdem Balım reviews one: a collection of essays edited by Behcet Kemal Yeşilbursa that also has a chapter by Professor Hale, *Presidency in Turkey 1924-2023*, which is included in our 'Politics & Economics' section. This is followed by two insightful articles covering the results of the local authority elections by Diego Cupolo and a review article by Mina Toksöz, focusing on the 'Economic consequences of de-institutionalisation' of the past decade.

The 'History, Society & Culture' part is enormously varied with Tamer Levent's authoritative and unique observations of the Theatre and the State of Art in Turkey (expertly translated by Polly Davies); followed by Elcin Macar's article on Turkey's Humanitarian Aid to Greece in WW II; and finally a more international overview of the Evolving Landscape of Turkish Studies at the Turkologentag 2023 by Kübra Uygur, which will be completed in due course by various articles of contributors to this event in a separate electronic version (organised by BATAS) as these are highly specialised.

The 'Book Reviews and Recent Publications' section with contributions by Çiğdem Balım, Bülent Gökay, Sevgi Adak and Arın Bayraktaroğlu remains in high demand. and covers much history of Turkey/Türkiye.

David Tonge produced a very memorable obituary for Turkish Cypriot born Metin Münir, the prominent investigative journalist, for the 'In Memoriam' section.

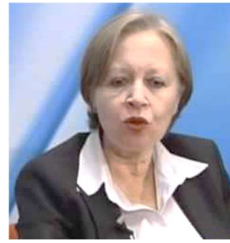
The co-editors are always deeply indebted to all the contributors and are very grateful to the proof-readers S Parkin, J Sindall, E Casassa, and above all, to Brian Beeley. Any further help with proof-reading would be very welcome. And – to quote from our last and last-but-one edition – we would more than welcome suggestions of anyone who might be approached for an article or review.

Sigrid-B Martin
Co-Editor

Mina Toksöz
Co-Editor

**The 2023 John Martin Lecture
in collaboration with the LSE
Alumni Theatre, Cheng Kin Ku Building,
London School of Economics
17 November 2023**

Turkish Politics and Foreign Policy: A Centennial Reflection



by **Şule Kut**
Professor of International
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Foreign Policy & the Balkans.
Previously Rector of Istanbul
Okan University & Vice
Rector of Istanbul Bilgi
University.

For the centenary of the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey, I had the honor to deliver a public lecture on 17 November 2023 in London. I am grateful to the British Association of Turkish Area Studies and the Chair of Contemporary Turkish Studies of the European Institute at LSE for inviting me to deliver BATAS's 2023 Annual John Martin Lecture. In my lecture I have mainly reflected – albeit briefly – on how the present-day Republic compares with the early Republic, and if Turkey could crown the Republic with a genuine democracy in the 21st century.

What is in a Centennial?

Founded on the ruins of a defunct Empire 100 years ago, the Republic's progressive vision in its formative years cannot be compared to any other political project in Turkey's history. While its journey over the past century has indeed been remarkable, Turkey faces multiple problems today and no other period apart from the current one has seen such diametrically opposed practices to the founding ideals of the Republic. This was very apparent in the centennial celebrations.

29 October 2023 was supposed to be celebrated as the Centenary of the Republic of Turkey. Instead, it was cynically dubbed by the government as the start of the 'Century of Türkiye'. The official preparations were minimal, the program was not announced until the last minute, the governmental celebrations were dull and low profile. The civil society's response, however, was impressive. The people, the opposition municipalities, major businesses, and NGOs organized spectacular events to celebrate the Republic's centenary. Although the government undermined the occasion, the majority of the people have genuinely embraced it.



Legacy of Atatürk

On another occasion in 2023, Turks commemorated the 85th anniversary of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's death on 10 November 1938. Millions poured into his mausoleum in Ankara. Even the critics of Atatürk had come to terms with him, it seemed to many observers.



A British citizen, Mr Bayard Simmons, 85 years ago, sent a letter to the Turkish Ambassador in London on the death of Atatürk: "As the first Briton to be imprisoned in my homeland for defending the women's suffrage campaign" he wrote, "may I express my deepest sympathy on the death of the President of Turkey?" He added, "what he did for women in his own country will be remembered with gratitude by feminists all around the World. Long live the Republic of Turkey based on the ideals of Kemal Atatürk!"

Women in Turkey indeed remember him with gratitude, and they are the leading societal opposition to anti-secular and anti-democratic practices, defending the secularist and egalitarian ideals of the Republic. However, they are not alone in their struggle. The anti-secularist rhetoric and practices of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) have motivated a growing civic consciousness in support of the founding ideals of the Republic. On the centenary of the Republic, many in Turkey, including the critics of Atatürk, rediscovered those ideals.

Founding Principles and Revolutionary Reforms

The Republic emerged on a dismembered multinational polity. From 1911 until 1922 the empire and its peoples suffered a series of wars which lasted for more than a decade and claimed millions of lives. To add insult to injury, from 1919 to 1922, the country, including its capital, was occupied by the Entente Powers. 1919 also marked the beginning of the War of Independence. On 10 August 1920 the infamous Sèvres Treaty was signed by the Sultan's delegates only to be rejected fiercely by the Turkish National Assembly which was convened in Ankara on 23 April. Next year, the latter adopted the 1921 Constitution while the war was going on full speed. War-time military leaders of the Ankara government were not only fighting against the Entente forces, but also against the 'Ancient Régimé' of Istanbul, with a determination to gain political legitimacy.

On 2 November 1922, the monarchy was abolished and, two weeks later, on 17 November 1922, the last Ottoman Sultan Vahdettin left Istanbul aboard the British warship HMS Malaya. The new Caliph Abdülmecid carried the title until 1924 when the Caliphate too was abolished on 3 March. On 29 October 1923, the Republic of Turkey was proclaimed. It took no time for the former military heroes to design it as a modern secular state run by an elected parliament.



The collapse of the empire led to the birth of a nation-state which required a twin process of both nation and state building, led by Mustafa Kemal and his associates. A series of radical reforms was adopted. The result was revolutionary. A new Republic of Turkey was rising like a sun during the gloomy inter-war years in Europe and shining as a role-model for several others around the world. The Ottoman Empire was not a colonial empire and Turkey itself was not a post-colonial state;

however, as a post-imperial state, it soon became a model of national independence for colonized nations. A new constitution was adopted, and a first opposition party was formed in 1924. Two years later, a modern Civil Code was adopted, opening a new era for Turkish citizens and particularly for women. In 1934, Turkish women gained suffrage rights well before their sisters in most other countries.

The young Republic secured most of its new borders with the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, which was accompanied by a Convention on Population Exchange between Turkey and Greece. Turkey has soon established good neighborly relations with former adversaries and initiated multilateral cooperation schemes in its region. Nation-building and state-building reforms and policies were not yet completed when the 1929 global economic crisis hit. In response, the government adopted a statist economic policy that was also accompanied by restrictions on democratic rights, leading to authoritarian practices, and eventually to growing opposition within and outside the Republican People's Party (CHP), the founding and the governing political party.

Multi-Party Period in Turkey

Authoritarian single-party rule was in full swing when Atatürk died in 1938. Transition to the multi-party system had to wait until the aftermath of World War II. In the first multiparty elections in 1946, which were considered neither free nor fair, İnönü's CHP won against the Democrat Party (DP), the main opposition party founded by disillusioned former CHP deputies. In the meantime, under the leadership of its second president, İsmet İnönü, Turkey remained outside the war although it was looking forward to becoming part of the post-WWII order. Soon after the war, it attained its objective, aligning itself with the West. Turkey became a founding member of the UN, joined international institutions such as IMF, World Bank, Council of Europe, and the OECD; participated in the Korean War; and joined NATO in 1952. It applied for membership to the EEC in 1959 and has kept its aspiration since then to become a full member of the EU, despite all the ups-and-downs in EU-Turkey relations.

The Democrat Party came to power in the 1950 elections, achieving the first true transition to multi-party politics in the republican period. However single-party mentality in government soon prevailed and the Menderes governments ruled with growing authoritarian tendencies, the result of which was the 1960 military coup. While the poisonous roots of majoritarianism in Turkey go back to the DP between 1950-1960, the undemocratic and anti-constitutional practice of military interventions in Turkish politics go back to the 1960 coup. Since then, Turkish democracy has experienced several interventions of different sorts by the military, the last of which was in 2016, the nature of which is still a mystery to many.

Although the military, regarded as the vanguard of the Republic by many, opened the way to the most democratic constitution of Turkey, the 1961 Constitution, and left the power to the civilian rule in a few short years, its intervention has been one of the most disturbing turning points in Turkish political history. Military tutelage would later be criticized both by the AKP and other anti-military segments of society. The strange coalition against the military by the democrats and the non-democratic AKP would later open the way to the most undemocratic phase of Turkish history in the early 21st century.

During the couple of decades after the early 1960s Turkey was to be ruled mainly by the center-right political parties and mostly by coalition governments including secular-Islamist coalitions, and a series of National Front administration governments. Islam has always been a theme used by the right-wing political parties, including the DP, although not starting with it. Secularists in Turkey, on the other hand, felt threatened by each and every move taken by the more openly and so-called Islamic parties. These fears would lead them in turn to support the restrictions of even the symbolic manifestations of Islam such as headscarves.

The post-1968 'anarchy years', with open conflicts between the left and right-wing armed factions were ended by the 1980 military intervention; the latter itself has also opened more channels for anti-secular practices in Turkey. Although the 1982 Constitution proposed by the military government was adopted by 91,37% in a referendum, Turgut Özal's Motherland Party (ANAP), not favored by the coup leaders, easily won the elections in 1983. Neo-liberalism gained momentum with Turgut Özal, whose party claimed to represent the four main political tendencies in the country.

With the end of the Cold War and the rise of the Kurdish issue, Turkey's security concerns multiplied. Moreover, the novel center-left and center-right coalitions of the 1990s did not last long and the global rise of identity-politics during the 1990s became one of the determining factors leading to the eventual rise of AKP in Turkey.

The Erdoğan Era

The 'White Turks – Black Turks' discourse of Erdoğan and the anti-Kemalism of the post-modern intellectuals along with the economic crisis of 2001 helped Erdoğan's AKP to come to power in 2002. It became the most over-represented political party in the history of Turkish parliament, capturing 66% of the seats with 34,29% of the votes. This was to the surprise of even its own founders, thanks to an election law that was designed to eliminate the smaller parties by setting a 10% threshold.

While the AKP has won all the general elections and referendums since then, the nature of both its support and opposition to the AKP has changed over time as the latter has evolved from a champion of rights and freedoms to a single-party of majoritarianism. Majoritarianism has indeed a long history in Turkey which works to the detriment of liberal democracy and-pluralism.

The Gezi Protests in 2013 marked a turning point for Erdoğan. After the infamous 2015 double-elections, securitization of issues led to a more confrontational stance in and outside Turkey vis-à-vis the dissidents and the opposition parties, while the country adopted a more interventionist stand in its region. Following the 2016 coup attempt and after the 2017 constitutional referendum that established a presidential system without checks and balances, single-party mentality took a new turn as it crystalized into one-man rule.

Under the AKP, political, social, and economic polarization peaked. The social fabric is deformed and the AKP's system of patronage with its charity network and happy circle of rentiers, has been critical for the maintenance of political power. Transfer of wealth from the traditional élites resulted not only in the creation of a newly rich class but also in the destruction of the urban middle classes. While the qualified young

work force started leaving, refugees from the Middle East have poured into the country, leading to an unprecedented rise of anti-refugee nationalism in Turkey. It is true that the current economic crisis is a reason for the educated young to leave the country. However, the main reason for the contemporary brain drain is more of a result of an open shift from meritocracy to clientelist loyalty. Anti-intellectualism has peaked under the AKP rule which has exhibited all signs of populist mediocrity with a strong religious touch. However, this seems to have backfired to a certain extent, as the number of deists and atheists increased under AKP rule while many pious Turks consider AKP Islamism to be an attack on their beliefs. AKP's experimentation with political Islam seems to have brought about its own end in Turkey.

The ideational pillars of the Republic as it was founded a century ago, secularism, women's rights, egalitarianism, and meritocracy, have all been increasingly undermined by the successive AKP governments. The principle of separation of powers and constitutional checks-and-balances, judicial independence, rule of law, and free media were effectively eradicated. The state institutions were transformed into party offices. Institutions, from the judiciary to the universities and the media, lost their autonomy and bowed to one-man rule. All in all, Turkish politics seems to be hijacked by Erdoğan as he has taken Turkey from an atmosphere of democratic competition in a parliamentary regime to which he owes his very own political existence to competitive authoritarianism under a deformed presidentialism of his own. In the literature, contemporary Turkey is labelled as a case of competitive authoritarianism, democratic erosion, authoritarian populism, authoritarian transformation, authoritarian consolidation, authoritarian reversal, authoritarian turn. Terms such as patrimonialism and sultanism are also in circulation. Turkey's journey from the Sultan's rule to 'Sultanism' in a century is indeed heartbreaking for many.

Democratic Resilience

I see the current phase of Turkish history as a long episode that will eventually come to an end. The costs on all fronts have been great, yet democratic resilience is still prevailing, and even more so in response to the heavy blows to democratic rights and freedoms and the founding principle of secularism. The civil opposition, albeit mostly unorganized, might also reanimate the stagnant political opposition in due time.

The presidential election of 2023 has been a blow to the opposition parties and their supporters who ended up being profoundly disappointed. However, this was yet another election carried under seriously unfair circumstances. Time will show if this defeat will further cripple or rejuvenate the opposition.

Turkey needs hope. Given its still-young population, rich resources, and diversified economy, sooner or later it can overcome the one-man-made economic crisis and end its undemocratic journey. What it needs is not necessarily another charismatic leader, but a rational leadership that can install hope again in the hearts and minds of its people. Today, the Republic, despite all open assaults on its founding

principles, is still alive, if not well; yet all harm can be undone in time so long as the democratic resilience of the people remains alive and kicking.¹

Politics & Economics

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk
(1881–1938)
İsmet İnönü
(1884–1973)
Celâl Bayar
(1883–1986)
Cemal Gürsel
(1895–1966)
Cevdet Sunay
(1899–1982)
Fahri Korutürk
(1903–1987)

Kenan Evren
(1917–2015)
Turgut Özal
(1927–1993)
Süleyman Demirel
(1924–2015)
Ahmet Necdet Sezer
(born 1942)
Abdullah Gül
(born 1949)
Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
(born 1954)

The Presidency in Turkey, 1924-2023

William Hale
Emeritus Professor, SOAS, London

Part 2

The shift to 'hyper-presidentialism', 2007-2017

In retrospect, the resolution of the crisis of 2007 can be seen as the end of an era, with Abdullah Gül potentially becoming the last president to be elected by the assembly rather than directly by the voters. The following 16 years have seen a shift to what has been classified as 'hyper-presidentialism',² with the future of the office still the subject of fierce debate. Direct election could be expected to increase the president's moral authority, even if his constitutional powers remained unaltered. Accordingly, Gül's election was seen as creating a 'dual authority structure within the executive'³ which was 'pushing the country towards a form of semi-presidentialism by stealth'.⁴

Following the change to direct election of the president, Tayyip Erdoğan decided to run for the presidency himself, once Gül's term ran out in 2014. In consequent elections, held in August 2014, he won an easy victory against Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, the weak compromise candidate put up by the opposition. Once elected, he made it clear that he would continue to act as though he were still prime minister – in effect, a *de facto* executive



¹ Since I gave this talk in November 2023, local elections were held on 31 March 2024, and they have marked a significant shift in current Turkish politics further supporting the resilience argument. The opposition votes united behind the CHP candidates; CHP became the first party for the first time since the 1977 general elections and the AKP came second for the first time since it came to power in 2002.

² Boyunsuz, *op.cit.*, p.68.

³ S.Erdem Aytaç, Ali Çarkoğlu and Kerem Yıldırım, 'Taking Sides: Determinants of Support for a Presidential System in Turkey', *South European Society and Politics*, Vol.23, No.1, p.3.

⁴ Kalaycıoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.161.

president, although this was clearly contrary to the constitution, and his presidential oath.⁵ Symbolic of this change was his move from the relatively modest presidential mansion in the Ankara suburb of Çankaya to a newly completed palace in Beştepe, on the edges of the city, spread over an area of 200,000 square metres and with 1,150 rooms.⁶ Built in a mock Seljuk-cum-Ottoman style, the 'White Palace' suggested also a switch from a republican to a Sultanic regime which was not lost on the president's many opponents.⁷

Ahmet Davutoğlu, formerly foreign minister, was appointed prime minister after Erdoğan's election to the presidency, and was evidently expected to act as his puppet, but these predictions proved misplaced. In the 2015 assembly elections the AKP lost its overall majority, although it was still the biggest party. Having failed to form a coalition, the prime minister was forced to opt for a second election in November 2015, in which the AKP regained its majority. This opened the way for a widening split between him and the president, with Davutoğlu opposing the trend towards an all-powerful presidency, as well as disagreements over important issues in foreign policy.⁸ Accordingly, Davutoğlu resigned from the premiership in May



2016, being replaced by Binali Yıldırım, formerly Minister of Transport, who acted as the president's puppet. Having pushed his critics out of the AKP, Erdoğan's power received an unexpected boost when he overcame an attempted coup by a coalition of military rebels on 15-16 July 2016. Using his powers under Article 120 of the constitution, Erdoğan declared a State of Emergency and chaired a meeting of the cabinet allowing it to 'issue decrees having the force of law on matters necessitated by the state of emergency'. The State of Emergency was extended by the assembly seven times, ending in July 2018.⁹ Erdoğan used his emergency powers to purge the bureaucracy of his opponents, stifle the opposition (especially in the south-east) and secure almost total support by the mass media.

In his 2014 election campaign, Erdoğan had advocated the amendment of the constitution, officially endorsing the *de facto* presidentialism which he applied in practice from then on. However, the AKP had initially lacked a three-fifths majority in the assembly, the minimum it needed to set up an amendment in motion. This hurdle was overcome in October 2016 when the ultra-right Nationalist Action Party (MHP) dropped its previous opposition to the AKP (albeit at the cost of serious internal splits and resignations) and agreed to support constitutional amendment. A raft of 21 amendments was passed by the house in January 2017.

⁵ Ibid, pp.162-3, 172.

⁶ Dimitar Bechev, *Turkey under Erdoğan: How a Country Turned from Democracy and the West* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2022) p.137.

⁷ An idea obliquely suggested by Erdoğan himself, who claimed that the presidential regime was 'based on our long-standing traditions of government': quoted, Sinem Adar and Günter Seufert, *Turkey's Presidential System after Two and a Half Years* (Centre for Applied Turkey Studies, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin, April 2021) p.8.

⁸ Mehul Srivastava, 'Why did Turkey's prime minister Ahmet Davutoglu step down?', *Financial Times*, 5 May 2016.

⁹ Data from Zafer Yılmaz, 'Erdoğan's presidential regime and strategic legalism: Turkish democracy in the twilight zone', *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol.20, No.2 (2020) p.268.

Of the 21 constitutional amendments, the most controversial affected the powers of the president, who now formally became the head of state and the head of the government. The office of prime minister was abolished, with the president appointing and dismissing ministers independently of parliament. Hence parliament could no longer hold confidence votes or dismiss the government. The president could also issue presidential decrees 'regarding executive power' which were not 'on the matters explicitly regulated by law' (Article 104).¹⁰ He was no longer required to resign from his party on assuming office – although in practice, Erdoğan had ignored this principle since his election in 2014. The president could declare a state of emergency for a period of up to six months, to be ratified by parliament on the same day, following which he could issue presidential decrees 'on matters necessitated by the state of emergency', 'notwithstanding' the fundamental civil rights supposedly guaranteed by the constitution - with the proviso again that these would need to be accepted by the assembly on the same day (Article 119).¹¹

In changes to Article 101 the president would now be elected for a maximum of two five-year terms, with the parliamentary term to be co-terminous and the parliamentary and presidential elections to be held on the same day (Article 77). However, to dissolve itself, and thus call new elections for both the assembly and the presidency, the chamber required a three-fifths majority instead of the absolute majority required previously. In the new wording of Article 104, the president could appoint and dismiss high-ranking state bureaucrats (loosely defined) and could 'regulate the procedure and principles governing the appointment thereof by presidential decree', giving him apparently unlimited power over senior bureaucratic appointments. As a result, key institutions like the Central Bank and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs lost their autonomy or (in the second case) their ability to influence government policy.¹² In conjunction with parliament, under amended versions of Articles 146 and 159, the president was also given important powers of appointment to vital judicial bodies, including the Constitutional Court, the High Court of Appeals, the Court of Accounts, and the Council of Judges and Prosecutors.

To come into effect, these amendments needed to be passed by a national referendum, scheduled for 16 April 2017. This was fought on anything but a level playing field, with the government having almost total control over the media, although the opposition parties were able to post billboard advertisements and hold some meetings in districts where they controlled the local authorities.¹³ Opposition speakers were also threatened with violence and restrictions. For most voters, the referendum was treated as a simple for-or-against verdict on the AKP, rather than the merits or demerits of the constitutional amendments.¹⁴ In spite of the uphill battle

¹⁰ The current (2023) English text is available at www.anayasa.gov.tr.

¹¹ Originally it was proposed that the president could declare a state of emergency independently, but this was altered to make the declaration dependent on parliamentary consent: Boyunsuz, op.cit., p.79.

¹² Ziya Öniş, 'Turkey's New Presidential Regime: Fragility, Resilience, Reversibility', *Reflektif Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol.4, No.1, pp.163-4: from <https://dergi.bilgi.edu.tr>.

¹³ Author's observations in Istanbul at the time.

¹⁴ Thus a survey carried out by S.Ertem Aytaç, Ali Çarkoğlu and Kerem Yıldırım found that the big majority of respondents were unaware of the differences between a parliamentary and a

faced by the opposition parties, they lost the referendum by only a narrow margin, with the 'no' votes scoring 48.6 percent, 51.4 percent in favour of the changes, and an 85 percent turnout rate. The opposition parties immediately complained that as many as 2.5 million potentially invalid ballots had been accepted.¹⁵ The complaint was not upheld, but there was little doubt that the referendum had been carried out in grossly unfair conditions, when Turkey was still under emergency rule.

Conclusions and prospects

While Tayyip Erdoğan was naturally pleased with the results of the referendum of 2017, reinforced by his two subsequent election victories in 2018 and 2023, his shift to presidentialism has been widely criticised as a drastic retreat from democratic standards, and a potential infringement of the European Convention on Human Rights, to which Turkey is a signatory.¹⁶ The adoption of what is called the 'Turkish type of presidentialism'¹⁷ can also be seen as part of a global change, and connected to a 'dramatic decline in the fortunes of liberal democracy', exemplified by other populist-authoritarian rulers, such as Donald Trump, Viktor Orban, Narendra Modi and Jair Bolsonaro.¹⁸ These criticisms raise two questions: first, whether the Turkish shift to a presidential system inevitably resulted in an over-powerful presidency: second, whether there is any future chance of restoring effective democracy through constitutional means.

On the first score, it will be argued that the division of powers between the legislature, executive and judiciary, classically advanced by Baron de Montesquieu and exemplified by the US constitution, limits the president's powers, and thus preserves the democratic system. However, the US president's power is in practice crucially limited not just by the classic division of powers in Washington, but also by the autonomy of the state governments, and by individual state identities. In contrast, federalism has never been part of the Turkish political agenda and has little chance of popular acceptance except by the Kurdish minority. Moreover, supporters of the 2007 amendments can argue that, constitutionally, the Turkish president has less power than his US equivalent – for instance, that while the US president nominates all the judges in the Supreme Court, as vacancies occur, appointments to the Constitutional Court, its Turkish equivalent, are mostly made by the assembly, not the president. The Turkish president's veto powers are still much more limited than

presidential republic: Aytaç, Çarkoğlu and Yıldırım, op.cit., p.4. The provinces voting 'no' also corresponded closely to those voting for the CHP in the previous elections.

¹⁵ See Jennifer Amur, 'Why Turkish opposition parties are contesting the election results', *Washington Post*, 17 April 2017, and *Yüksek Seçim Kurulu 573 No'lu Kararı*:

http://www.ysk.gov.tr/cs/groups/public/documents/document/ndq0/mdiz/~edisp/yskpwc1_4444023324.pdf

¹⁶ See, for instance European Parliament, Committee on Foreign Affairs, 'Report on the 2021 Commission Report on Turkey' para 8: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2022-0149_EN.html and Erdal Şahin, 'Applicability of the right to free elections clause of the ECHR to presidential elections: the case of Turkey's new presidential system', *The International Journal of Human Rights*. Vol.27, No.4 (2023) p.765

¹⁷ Boyunsuz, op.cit., p.59.

¹⁸ Öniş, op.cit, pp.169-70.

those of his US counterpart.¹⁹ Likewise, the amendments give the Turkish president wide powers of appointment to the public service, but similar powers are also exercised by the US president.

Part of the explanation of this paradox appears to lie in Turkish political traditions. In particular, the idea of strong leadership has a high degree of popular acceptance, evidenced by the widespread display of Atatürk's portrait, and of other historical figures, and not just in state establishments. More materially, the key to Erdoğan's continuing power as president would appear to be his almost continuous command of a parliamentary majority (since 2018, in alliance with the Nationalist Action Party) and the top-heavy structure of Turkey's political parties. In most cases, these act as personal vehicles for the leader, with very little grass roots autonomy.²⁰ In the classic Montesquieuan formula, the legislature is expected to balance and limit the power of the executive, but in the Turkish case a centrally controlled ruling party structure has the opposite effect.

Given the widespread criticisms of the 2017 amendments there seemed to be a strong case for a return to a parliamentary system, with a non-executive, non-partisan presidency, a government responsible to the assembly, and the independence of the judiciary and other state institutions firmly established. Essentially, this was what was proposed by the opposition 'Republic Alliance', formed by the CHP and five other parties for the 2023 elections, in their 'Agreement on Common Policies'. In these proposals, the president would again be obliged to resign from his or her party, if any, would be directly elected for a single seven-year term, and would not be allowed to issue decrees or return to politics after serving as president. Executive power would be transferred to the prime minister and cabinet. A state of emergency could only be declared for a period of two months, and emergency decrees could not be issued. A revised State of Emergency Law would be issued, and actions taken under it would be subject to judicial review. The president's power to appoint a wide range of senior state bureaucrats would also be withdrawn.²¹

Thanks to its defeat in the 2023 elections, the programme proposed by the Republic Alliance fell by the wayside, but this did not mean that it would be permanently abandoned. For his part, following his narrow election victory, President Erdoğan announced that the draft of a new constitution would be produced which would be 'civilian, comprehensive and liberal'.²² However, details were lacking, and it was hard

¹⁹ Under Article 119 of the amended constitution, if the president returns a bill to the assembly, the deputies can overturn his veto by an absolute majority (50 percent of the total membership+ 1) rather than the 2/3 majority of both houses required in Washington.

²⁰ Adar and Seufert, op.cit., p.25.

²¹ For these and other details, see. *Ortak Politikalar Mutabakat Metni*, 30 January 2023, pp.49-50: : from <https://chp.org.tr/yayin/ortask-politikalar-mutabakat-metni>, and *Güçlendirilmiş Parlamenter Sistem Anayasa Değişikliği Önerisi*, 28 December 2022 pp.59, 73, 75, 77-8, 117-8, 129-32, 137, 140 : from <https://chp.org.tr/yayin/guclendirilmis-parlamenter-sistem-anayasa-degisikligi-onerisi>. A criticism of these proposals is that retaining the system of direct election to the presidency would make it difficult to maintain the idea of a non-partisan president, but the 'Republic Alliance' evidently decided that it would be a mistake to suggest that they did not trust 'the people'.

²² 'Türkiye aims to draft new, democratic Constitution: Erdoğan', *Daily Sabah*, 14 June 2023.

to see how the new constitution could be ‘liberal’ if the existing presidential system were retained, as the president promised. More materially, after May 2023, Erdoğan lacked the minimum of a three-fifths majority in the assembly which would be needed to launch a new constitution, with the further hurdle of a national referendum to be overcome. Unless he enacted yet another change in the constitution, he would be obliged to retire from the presidency in 2028, by which time he would be 74 years of age. Whatever the ultimate outcome, in 2023 it was clear that the status and powers of the president would continue to be a crucial and controversial issue in Turkey for many years to come, as they had for the previous century.

Realekonomik: Inflation delivers a setback for Erdoğan’s AKP

Diego Cupolo

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Everything is politics until it’s not. Party loyalties and ideologies can blur when the hard realities of an economy gone awry take hold of popular narratives, pocketbooks, and stomachs as the Turkey’s elections demonstrated this spring.

After at least six years of high inflation, voter sentiments on long-brewing economic problems were reflected in ballot boxes with a clear decline in support for President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s Justice and Development Party (AKP). Yet local elections neither equal nor forecast general elections, as was the case between 2019 and 2023 voting outcomes. Additionally, Erdoğan and the AKP retain control of the national executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. Still, for opposition parties and voters, the outcome also shows Erdoğan and the AKP are not invincible after victories in the May 2023 presidential and general elections, which were also held under significant economic strains and amid heavy criticism of the government for its slow initial response to the devastating February 6 earthquakes in southern Turkey. So, what changed over the last year that could explain such a divergence in election results between 2023 and 2024?

Primarily, economic conditions worsened. Inflation accelerated with a return to orthodox monetary policies after a period of artificial deceleration, the Turkish lira weakened by 50 percent against major currencies, and pensions did not keep pace with price hikes. Altogether, a cost-of-living crisis hit voters sharply between elections and they responded by punishing the AKP for what they saw as economic mismanagement.

At the same time, main opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP) changed its leadership and campaign tactics, citizens crossed party lines to vote strategically – or not at all in the AKP’s case – and more broadly, the lower-stakes nature of local elections allowed pro-Erdoğan voters to express frustration with the ruling

government, without cutting loyalty to Erdoğan, in what is best read as a flashing warning sign for the AKP.

CHP gains

In local elections held on March 31, the AKP lost key mayoral races and provincial assembly majorities, most notably in the nation's five most-populated metropolitan areas, including Istanbul, according to preliminary results. Of Turkey's 81 provinces, the AKP now holds 24, down from 39 after the 2019 local elections. To compare, the CHP now holds 35 provinces, up from 21 in 2019. Notably, the CHP will also govern many dense population centers, increasing the party's access to financial resources, at the expense of the AKP. Likewise, the CHP will have direct access to the majority of Turkey's population as it will govern about 53 million of Turkey's 85 million citizens, whereas the AKP will govern about 19.5 million at the local level. For the CHP, the opportunity to build direct relations with voters through governance will allow the party to circumvent and subvert the likely negative messages to come from mainstream media outlets, nearly all of which are run by AKP-friendly entities that tend to avoid positive opposition party coverage and highlight narratives of municipal mismanagement – real and fake.

In broader terms, the CHP vote share surpassed that of the AKP for the first time since Erdoğan's party came to power in 2002. With more than 37 percent of the nationwide vote, the CHP broke a so-called '25 percent ceiling' and drew support from diverse voting blocs. In previous elections, opposition voters often cited a lack of viable alternatives to defeat Erdoğan and the AKP. The lack of political change fed apathy among disappointed citizens, particularly after the May 2023 elections.



The election of new CHP chair Özgür Özel in November 2023 may have allowed space for new ideas and new electoral tactics in the much deflated party after thirteen years of leadership under Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu. Though he worked to expand the secular party's base, making it more welcoming for Turkey's conservative majority and ethnic minorities, it appears his May 2023 election loss cancelled out his contributions to the party for many opposition voters – at least in the short-term.

In contrast, Özel has benefited from his predecessor's reforms, and now leads a party that appeals to pious citizens as well as cosmopolitan, liberal urbanites, two voting blocs represented through Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu. At the same time, the CHP has expanded its appeal to nationalists through Ankara Mayor Mansur Yavaş, a former member of the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). The two mayors represent future challengers to AKP rule, as their presence and actions in the party replicate the Erdoğan's original recipe for success: broad appeal to Turkey's diverse citizens and a focus on improving municipal services.

Inflation losses

As previously suggested, the CHP gains came amid economic mismanagement by the AKP. For years, price hikes and inflation have been the mainstay of conversations and complaints in Turkey and, in 2024, they spilled over into ballot boxes. Public frustration with economic conditions reached critical mass in the March 31 election and more citizens have since been expressing their hardships following the vote, possibly as the outcome permits more space to do so. The trend is

particularly evident in post-election *sokak röportajları* or informal street interviews known as vox pops in English media.

Since March 31, the vast majority of participants in street interviews with non-AKP-aligned media acknowledge inflation has been too high for too long. This includes self-identified AKP-supporters who pin election outcomes on rising rents. Among the most telling street interviews in the post-election period, a resident of Kasımpaşa – the conservative neighborhood where Erdoğan grew up – laid out the stakes in blunt terms on *Medyascope* an opposition-friendly media channel. “If Erdoğan loses, he will lose because of the economy,” the unnamed speaker said, before referring to the 2016 failed coup attempt. “Look, a coup happened, [and] citizens marched to their death [for Erdoğan] ... Those same citizens are not voting for Erdoğan now.” Such statements underline the severity of the economic crisis and the toll it’s taken on loyalty within the AKP voter base. According to official figures, annual inflation rose after the May 2023 elections from about 38 percent in June 2023 to 68.5 percent in March 2024.

While the accuracy of official economic figures is often questioned, there have been very real and very steep increases in the price of consumer products and real estate. Based on my own market research, average rental rates for modest apartments in central Istanbul and Ankara have surpassed 25,000 liras per month (775 USD). Five years ago, the average modest apartment was about 4,000 liras in central Istanbul, and about 2,000 liras in central Ankara. Of course, the lira has also seen a dramatic devaluation since 2018, but the latest slump came just after the 2023 elections. On May 29, 2023, 1 USD traded for about 20 liras. On April 2, 2024, 1 USD traded above 32 liras. The change reflects a more than 50 percent currency devaluation in ten months.



The change also reflects a return to orthodox monetary policies after the appointment of Mehmet Şimşek as Finance Minister in June 2023. Following the 2023 vote, Şimşek applied the gradual return to conventional policies through benchmark interest increases hikes – from 8.5 percent in June 2023 to 50 percent in March 2024 – increasing borrowing costs. At the same time, the AKP had to go into campaign mode before the local elections. And so the monthly minimum wage was increased by 55 percent to about 17,000 liras (527 USD) in December 2023, adding further inflationary pressure on the economy, while also failing to close the gap between monthly income and monthly rental rates in Turkey’s two largest cities, leaving many voters feeling unsupported amid in a spiralling cost of living crisis.

Pensioners pains

At the start of this year, Erdoğan was aware of the economic pain to come. He also knew he lacked the budget to soften the blow for the AKP constituency. His party is known to have among the best internal polling of voter sentiments and surely his inner circle was aware of the wide discontent with Turkey’s economic conditions ahead of the vote. Erdoğan answered with an early campaign pitch to retirees in January, when he raised minimum monthly pension payments to 10,000 liras (310 USD) and promised to deliver further benefits in the near future. He went as far as

calling 2024, “the year of retirees”, again showing he knew the voting block was both underserved by his policies and vital to AKP electoral success.

Restrained by conventional economic policies, Erdoğan could not deliver the promised relief for pensioners, who in media interviews repeatedly expressed their difficulties in making ends meet with their small allowances in the face of high inflation. With expectations unmet and personal finances crumbling, many retirees protested the AKP in the local elections. This had resounding impacts on outcomes as pensioners represent 20-26 percent of voters according to economists studying the group. Erdoğan’s unorthodox policies not only created the conditions for the current cost of living crisis, but the large number of disgruntled pensioners was also his own doing.



In December 2022, the Turkish leader dropped the retirement age requirement in Turkey, making millions of working-age citizens eligible to receive state pension benefits. The move was intended to appeal to voters ahead of the May 2023 elections, but it also increased state expenditures, creating dynamics in which Erdoğan could no longer raise pension payments due to budget constraints. This left a large voting block of pensioners living far below Turkey’s hunger threshold, which is currently 20,000 liras per month according to the Birleşik Kamu-İş labor unions confederation. Post-election analysis often highlights the significant role frustrated retirees may have played in local election outcomes.

Strategic and protest votes

In addition to CHP gains and economic losses, voters also proved to be unexpectedly strategic in the 2024 local elections. Despite the collapse of the 2023 opposition alliance and the large field of candidates from many races, preliminary results indicate a majority of opposition voters still supported CHP candidates, particularly in western provinces.

First, the nationalist voter base for the İYİ Party and Victory Party appears to have collapsed and gone mostly to CHP candidates. Second, about half of the supporters for the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party) appear to have backed CHP candidates in western provinces while backing their own candidates in the Kurdish-majority southeastern region. These two trends suggest voters backed the candidates most likely to defeat the AKP in western provinces, often resulting in anti-Erdoğan votes going to the CHP.

Third, many frustrated conservative voters that previously backed Erdoğan and the AKP, this time cast protest votes for Islamist New Welfare Party (YRP). The shift was significant enough to catapult the YRP from a fringe AKP collation partner to the third most successful party in the 2024 local elections, collecting about 6.2 percent of the vote share.

Initial post-election analysis suggests, the YRP benefited not only from AKP economic mismanagement, but also from the AKP’s failure to cut commercial ties with Israel amid military operations in Gaza after the 7 October attacks by Hamas militants. Following the AKP’s election losses, one of the Turkish government’s first actions was to announce trade restrictions on Israel, signaling Ankara would take further action on the issue to address voter sentiments.

Finally, initial analyses of the voter outcomes also indicate a significant number of AKP voters abstained from the 2024 local elections, which saw a relatively low voter turnout of 78.1 percent compare to 85.5 percent in the 2019 local elections. The trend is also interpreted to be a sign of frustration with the AKP's economic policies.

Looking forward

The combination of the dynamics above, along with economic hardships, all point to a rough road ahead for the AKP. Voters gave Erdoğan and his inner circle a warning. The AKP leadership is now planning its response, which could take many forms and could tilt popular sentiments back in its favor before the next elections, likely in 2028 barring snap elections.

A much-talked about military operation in Iraq may help boost nationalist sentiments. Likewise, the possible re-election of Donald Trump in the United States would allow Ankara more leeway in northern Syria, where another cross-border operation could take shape with a change at the White House.

Still, the economy will remain a major constraint and will likely require a series of austerity measures to curb inflation with the goal of restoring growth and stability before the next vote. Another U-turn on monetary policy is not expected for the simple reason that the government cannot afford it. Along similar lines, Erdoğan's long-sought constitutional referendum is not expected in the near-term as he lacks the parliamentary votes to pass it without a public referendum, and the economic conditions are unfavorable for such a diversion.

Overall, Turkish politics is entering a highly unstable period where measures and countermeasures may be taken in rapid succession between political parties. Alliances may shift, cabinets may change, and policies may be readjusted to draw financial support from abroad. Analysts have long described Erdoğan as a transactional and pragmatic leader. The 2024 local elections have shown his voter base shares the same traits and is currently pushing for a better deal.

REVIEW ARTICLE:

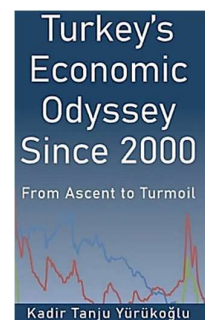
The economic consequences of 'de-institutionalisation'

Turkey's Economic Odyssey since 2000, from Ascent to Turmoil, Kadir Tanju Yürükoğlu, independently published, 2023.

Industrial Policy in Turkey, Rise, Retreat, and Return, Mina Toksöz, Mustafa Kutlay, William Hale, Edinburgh University Press, 2023

Democracy and Capitalism in Turkey, the State, Power, and Big Business, Devrim Adam Yavuz, IB Tauris, 2023

Turkey's Economic Odyssey is a comprehensive analysis of the past two decades of the Turkish economy. Yürükoğlu is a veteran development economist who worked for decades at the World Bank on a wide range of emerging markets and has seen many opportunities missed because of weak state capacity, governance problems and bad policy. As the title suggests, the author finds the

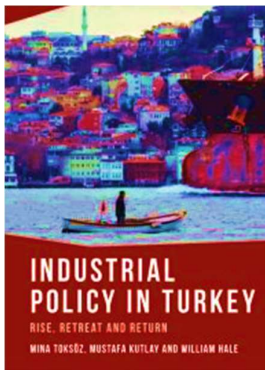


current state of the Turkish economy unacceptable and has written a devastating critique of the hap-hazard credit and construction led growth policies followed in the past decade. The author discusses several causes of why ‘the Turkish economy has moved like a vessel without a compass’ (p301) including the appointment of people in government without the necessary knowledge and experience, the move away from the Turkish republic’s secular foundations, instrumentalisation for political ends of longer-term fundamentals such as education, and de-institutionalisation.

These years are analysed in three distinct periods: 2003-07, 2008-17 and, the third from 2018 to date that has come to be known as the ‘late-AKP era’. This periodisation is roughly in line with many other studies which see 2003-07 as generally positive in terms of growth and productivity, the second covering 2008-17 as maintaining some positive but declining momentum, and the post-2018 period as featuring the consequences of the deteriorating institutional framework and incoherent macro-policies that have led to inflation accelerating to one of the highest in the world. The book includes sections covering key sectors including construction, manufacturing, energy, health, which has grown rapidly in the past two decades, and agriculture that has been performing worse than it should have, given Turkey’s comparative advantage. The analysis also has chapters on education and on income distribution which has worsened with accelerated inflation.

A useful annex (‘How the world sees changes in Turkey’) provides charts and comparative data with other upper middle-income economies such as Mexico and Malaysia. These mostly show an improvement in Turkish indices until 2013-15 but a deterioration since. For example, the World Economic Forum ‘Global Competitiveness Index’ shows Turkey’s position declined from 43rd in 2012-13 to 61st in 2018. This trend is repeated with institutional indicators such as the ‘rule of law’ in World Governance Indicators by the World Bank and others.

These indicators also support the analysis in *Industrial Policy in Turkey* (whose



authors include two BATAS council members and this reviewer) which provides a historical overview of state role in industrialisation which mostly corresponds to the changes in international development paradigms on the economic role of the state. The book covers the heyday of industrial policies in the 1960s and their ‘retreat’ with the liberalisation policies of the 1980s, including during the first decade of AKP rule when R&D and the ‘New Economy’ sectors were neglected. The second half focuses on the “return” of industrial policies since the global financial crisis. The AKP adopted industrial policies to try to overcome the vulnerability of the Turkish economy to

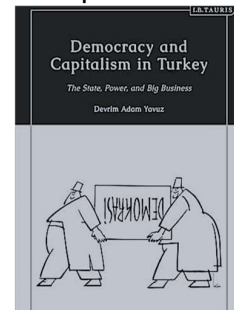
global shocks which became evident after the 2008-09 global crisis. Hence, the main aims of industrial policies consisted of reducing the import dependence of Turkish industry and a tech-upgrade to maintain the position of sectors such as automotives, chemicals, and white goods where Turkey had a comparative advantage. But it was with the 11th Five Year Plan (FYP) published in 2019 that a more ambitious, transformative technological strategy was adopted. Among its aims was to increase high-tech products as a share of total manufactured exports from around 3% where it has remained for decades to 5.8% by 2023 – a target that was missed. In 2021 a Green Agenda was adopted as well as a National Artificial Intelligence Strategy.

These were incorporated in the 12th FYP published in 2023 that, given current trends, includes more targets likely to be missed.

Toksöz, Kutlay, and Hale's analysis shows that industrial policy measures over the past decade and a half have succeeded in establishing a framework for a possible transformation of industry into a higher tech, higher productivity economy as seen with the breakthrough sectors such as defence and the emergence of Turkish unicorns in 2021. But the impact of these policies has faltered in the late-AKP era. The rise in macro-economic instability not seen since the 1990s and weakening of the institutional environment not seen since the early years of the Turkish Republic has made technology diffusion more difficult. Thus, the advances in the few breakthrough sectors are failing to be translated into productivity growth in the wider economy that would also result in an increase in social welfare.

Industrial Policy in Turkey observes that under current political and institutional conditions the extensive incentives for a tech-upgrade end up mostly being used for electoral handouts or Keynesian counter-crisis policies to cushion business against frequent economic crises. This is because of the complexity and lack of coordination of many layers of investment incentives, the involvement of patronage connections and lack of transparency and monitoring in their allocation, and the absence of reciprocity (where, as in South Korea, if the firms do not meet their targets, incentives are withdrawn). There is also the problem of low skills preventing technology adoption by small and medium sized enterprises that make up the bulk of Turkish industrial firms and employment. Hence, there is a high risk that Turkey could be stuck not only in a middle-income but also a middle-of-the road technology trap.

Democracy and Capitalism in Turkey by Devrim Adam Yavuz explores the relationship of big business to democracy by tracing the evolution of the Turkish Industry and Business Association (Tüsiad: **Türk Sanayicileri ve İş Adamları Derneği**), founded in 1971 to represent big business. Hence the book complements the other two reviewed here by providing the perspectives of big business in the liberalisation era of the 1980-90s and the period of AKP rule. The analysis is based on three rounds of interviews with Tüsiad members: in 2001-2002 that explores the context in which Tüsiad published the 1997 report, 'Perspectives on Democratisation in Turkey'; during 2008-2012 traces the evolution of Tüsiad's relations with the AKP, also including interviews with Müsiad and Tuskon (shut down after the attempted coup in 2016); and in 2021-22, on how Tüsiad is managing to continue its advocacy of rule of law and democratisation.



Yavuz observes that external factors, namely the Turkish application for EU membership, has been the usual explanation given as to why Tüsiad published its landmark 1997 democratisation report. But the author is more interested in the domestic context which – given some of its radical reform proposals around the Kurdish question, could have endangered its relationship with the political elite. Yavuz argues that a major driving force was Tüsiad's attempt to revise the historically negative view of business since the early years of the Republic towards an outlook that valued its social contribution. During the 1970s, as the Turkish

business elite saw their economic power grow, they also sought to bolster their ideological and political position. To that end, “from the outset, Tüsiad tried to act as a think tank and started to publish various reports on a number of issues” (p104). This included reports that drew a distinction between the public sector as being increasingly inefficient versus the private sector that offered a more productivity-led model of growth than state-led industrialisation. Hence Tüsiad actively promoted the liberalisation reforms that were being discussed in the late 1970s and is generally seen as having supported the 1980 military coup.²³

So how did Tüsiad then become an advocate of democratisation in the 1990s? Yavuz argues that the experience of liberalisation in the 1980s and 1990s led Tüsiad to reflect increasingly on the distinction between the functioning of efficient, “more *formal* private enterprise and a political elite that still relied on *informal* state-society relations to govern” (p150, my italics). Interestingly, and in line with the approach in *Industrial Policy in Turkey*, the deficiencies of state intervention were seen “as much about the types (or quality) of intervention as they were about its quantity, an idea also formulated by ...development strategies that emphasise the need for strong government institutions” (p151). This stance was in turn reinforced by external factors as Turkish industry integrated with the global economy and the EU Customs Union. Good governance and the rule of law came to be seen as being essential for Turkish industry to remain competitive internationally and was the fundamental basis of the 1997 democratisation report.²⁴

The next question is whether this pro-democracy stance can be sustained in the late-AKP era. As AKP rule became more authoritarian, Yavuz notes that “literature would predict that AKP’s rise would have made Tüsiad more conservative” (p19) as seen with bureaucratic authoritarian regimes in Latin America. But instead, Tüsiad members continued with their earlier efforts for democratic consolidation and also adopted a number of measures to maintain this position. One was to reduce the focus on political and ideological issues while increasing economic topics. The second was to try to overcome Tüsiad’s social and geographical isolation with the establishment of Kadiger in 2002 providing support for women entrepreneurs and Turkonfed in 2004 representing small and medium sized enterprises throughout Anatolia.

Yet after an initial period of good relations when rapid growth and democratisation prevailed in 2002-07, threats to the secularist establishment and to Tüsiad’s privileged position became increasingly apparent. There was also the challenge from an emerging entrepreneurial class loyal to the AKP with their own associations. In 2013, relations with the government reached a crisis-point during the Gezi protests. Other clashes included Doğan Holding being forced to divest its media assets to pro-government entities. Tüsiad’s political and ideological position continued to weaken with declining prospects for Turkish membership of the EU.

²³ Yavuz refers to the full page newspaper advertisements by Tüsiad in 1979 to criticise the Ecevit government’s economic policies. p106.

²⁴ These views were followed up with wide-ranging institutional reforms after the 2001 crisis that established independent market regulating agencies. But the independence of these entities was steadily eroded by the AKP government from 2011 onwards. See Chapters 4-5 in *Industrial Policy in Turkey*.

But its economic position remained strong. As late as 2010, Tüsiad entities still dominated the Turkish economy, producing 65% of manufacturing output (p170). Even by the second decade of AKP rule, Tüsiad's share of total revenues in top-100 firms still stood at 41.7% in 2020 – up from 32% in 2001(although down from its peak of 53% in 2006). No doubt, this powerful position in the economy provides a strong basis from which to argue for challenging democratic reforms. Yavuz concludes that organisations such as Tüsiad's persistence in advocating democratic rule should be understood not only in terms of their instrumental and economic interests but also their need for a “sense of ideological legitimacy” (p192). Yavuz highlights a key-note speech in 2021 by the then chairman of Tüsiad, Simone Koslovski, where he argued that de-institutionalisation in the past decade of AKP rule as being the “root-cause of Turkey's ills” – a trend which Tüsiad aims to offset by its support for gender equality, education, the efficiency of institutions, the environment, and the importance of civil society and democracy (pp186-87).

But the author is also conscious of the deep divisions in the business class and that Tüsiad is struggling to broaden its class alliances with which to maintain its democratisation role. He leaves as a question, if Tüsiad's material interests and the historical importance of keeping close ties to the state will result in Tüsiad adopting a more apolitical stance. That may be the case but a bottom-up approach examining how business groups are dealing with the travails of the AKP era also reveals interesting insights. Turkish holdings are experts at diversification in products, sectors, and export markets, but also in diversifying their political risks at the international and local/provincial levels. A recent research of business groups' political ties in Gaziantep showed the biggest firms have diversified their political loyalties “across the full religious-secular-nationalist spectrum”.²⁵ Internationalisation is another option. Excluding real-estate, Turkish outward FDI exceeded inward FDI in 2023. Many Turkish corporates are seeking to maintain competitiveness by investing in countries offering lower cost-base or to access skills and technology. One example is Kordsa, of Tüsiad member Sabancı Holding – one of Turkey's most agile and forward-looking conglomerates: it operates in seven countries and, in addition to its Turkish R&D centres, recent additions are at the University of Munich and an Asia Pacific Technical Centre in Indonesia.²⁶

There is a common thread in all three books that see the establishment of the presidential system after the 2017 referendum and the ensuing hyper-concentration of power in the presidency as the pivotal year when institutional environment and economic-policy making began its precipitous descent – although signs of decline were there earlier. Following the May 2023 general election, a U-turn away from the election-oriented, cheap-credit & weak-currency-led-growth policy seems to have helped stave off a major currency crisis. Since then, tightened monetary policies have brought a semblance of rationality, earning Turkey a sovereign rating upgrade

²⁵ “Local champions and change of governments: a longitudinal analysis of firms' political ties in Gaziantep, Turkey” by Lisa Ahsen Sezer, Gul Berna Ozcan, in *Journal of Economic Geography*, 2024, 1-21.

²⁶ “Pazardan 7 kat fazla büyüyen Kordsa'nin gozu yeni satin almada”, Handan Sema Ceylan, 1 March 2024, [ekonomim.com](https://www.ekonomim.com).

from Fitch rating agency from B to B+ in March 2024 -- the first upgrade after 12 years.

But the Turkish economy will need more than a few years of policy correction to begin to bring down inflation and restore belief in the credibility, transparency, and independence of policy making entities from the presidential prerogative. The resilience of Turkish people and corporates to manage volatility should not be underestimated. This, as well as Turkey's geostrategic position, large domestic market, and several competitive industrial and service sectors has enabled the economy to navigate such stormy conditions – even 'without a compass'. But the flip-flops of policy and associated uncertainty arising from weak rule-of-law and de-institutionalisation will continue to undermine long-term investments needed for the Turkish economy to join the band of few successful emerging markets that graduated from middle-income to higher income status.

Mina Toksöz

History, Society & Culture



Theatre as Art and The State of Art in Turkey Tiyatronun Sanat Hali, Sanatın Türkiye Hali

by **Tamer Levent**

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In Turkey, the words theatre and art only started to be used together after the foundation of the Republic. Prior to that, theatre and acting was not considered a widespread or useful form of culture. Theatre acting was not considered to be a career at all, and families did not want their daughters to marry actors – because actors were seen as people who could not earn enough money to set up a home, had no career, were unskilled and could not support a family.

Instead of 'tiyatro,' the word 'orta oyun' (lit. 'middle play') was used. The orta oyunlar were similar to the 'Commedia Dell'Arte' in Italian culture. Shakespeare's theatre – dramatic theatre – consists of scenarios and is best performed on stage and, just as that can be considered as one of the roots of English culture and even English democracy, Commedia dell'arte in Italian culture forms the roots of open form theatre. A written text is not required. The orta oyunlar performed during the Ottoman period also reflected the culture of the time. Not much was written about theatre schools and their philosophy during these periods.



Ancient Greek plays really developed the idea of written, dramatic theatre. Commedia dell'arte and the almost identical orta oyunlar were improvised and mostly performed outside in town squares. In the Ottoman period, being an actor in the orta oyunlar was not seen as an acceptable occupation but rather as a something which unemployed men took an interest in. Women could not take part in these plays. Because of this, women's roles were played by men disguised as women, called 'zenne'. Testimonies of the orta oyun actors were not permissible evidence in court. The money they could earn in these circumstances was very limited.

Apart from the orta oyunlar, there were also plays called 'köy seyirlik oyunu' or 'village theatrical plays' which were performed in the villages and involved village people sharing experiences with each other. These plays were not performed to earn money but were really based on the principle of village people describing their lives directly to one another by acting out roles and it was through this that a type of drama was created. During the Ottoman period, the Sultans brought theatrical groups over from Europe and with their families watched plays on a small stage in the palace. It was during this period that it is said that Molière's theatre company performed a play at the palace. Ahmet Vefik Pasa, who had been ambassador in Paris and later Grand Vizier, had started the first theatrical activities when appointed as governor of Bursa.

Since Muslim women could not participate, Armenian women had started to appear on stage and Armenian theatre actors were pioneers in theatre during the Ottoman period. The first Muslim woman to perform on stage was Afife Jale. Under Sharia Law, Muslim women could not act on the stage and Afife Jale was arrested many times, harassed by the police, and ultimately suffered from mental trauma.



Towards the end of the Ottoman Empire, before the end of the War of Independence, there was a period of resistance and struggle in Istanbul. The Darülbedayi – the Imperial Theatre – was established 1914 as both a school and a theatre in Istanbul and yet acting was still not considered a profession. Actors were put in the same category as davul and zurna players, which did not have a specific term for their field – despite being considered as a profession. Parents of daughters wanted them to marry men who worked in more important roles, they did not see theatre as a profession, and thought their children would be unhappy. Training in acting began at the founding of the Republic with the opening of the Theatre Department at Ankara State Conservatory, formerly known as the Musiki Muallim Mektebi, in 1936.

Later, the State Theatre of the Republic of Turkey, located in Ankara and directly subsidised by the state, was established in 1949. The State Theatre was established with the obligatory participation of the first graduates of the Ankara State Conservatory and branches were set up in Istanbul, Izmir, Trabzon, Adana, Bursa, Sivas, Antalya, Erzurum, and Gaziantep. It became a pioneer of a national theatre, performing 150 plays a year and operating in the regions. When first established, the name of this structure was the State Theatre, representing the theatres opened in the regions and affiliated with the central government. It was later changed to 'The

State Theatres', which, as the largest subsidised theatre in the Republic of Turkey, were established with the aim of "developing and popularising theatre culture in Turkey". This sentence outlines the purpose of the State Theatres in the law which establishes its foundation. Its first general director was from the Darülbedayi period. Muhsin Ertuğrul was the one who defended universal theatre, and the principles he defended followed an artistic path in securing the place of theatre culture within the culture of democracy.

The State Theatres also pioneered the development of private theatres in Turkey. After 1949, many independent theatres were founded and went bankrupt within a few years. But during all of this, professional definitions (like those used by ILO and ISO) which would have established theatrical work as a profession, never developed. Professional acting definitions did not materialise in the State Theatres or later in the Istanbul Municipality City Theatres – the subsidised theatre which had been established as an extension of Darülbedayi in Istanbul. Professional definitions were also not established for those actors working in independent theatres.

While everyone wanted theatre culture to be popularised, the professional definitions which would have helped it spread did not materialise. There were no new laws or regulations. Acting unions were not established. The State Theatre, Opera and Ballet Employees Foundation (Devlet Tiyatroları, Opera ve Balesi Çalışanları Vakfı or TOBAV), became the most active of the non-governmental organisations established in the following years. In 1981, despite the military coup, I and my friends established a foundation. Our foundation, called TOBAV for short, expanded into the international arena, becoming an international organisation along the lines of the IATA, ITI and FIA. In order to ensure we followed global practices, TOBAV held international meetings in Turkey and also organised international festivals. It organised two international workshops: one on Turkish Theatre and one on the management style of theatre culture.

I have served as the chairman of TOBAV for 32 years since its foundation. We ensured the establishment of the first professional actors association, TOMEK. In 1994, I was elected the general artistic director and Director of the State Theatres. Following decisions made at workshops, the Director was to be elected by the general assembly and since there was no regulation around this, a trend poll was held within the institution. The person who received the most votes among the candidates was then appointed with the signatures of the Ministry of Culture, the Prime Ministry and the Presidency. It was this election which I won. However, after I left office, this election was not repeated. Instead, the government appointed the Director. Our aim was to institutionalise this tradition. During the years I was in management, I was the only person who attended WIPO meetings and EU meetings as both Director of TOBAV, an NGO, and the general artistic director of the Republic of Turkey State Theatres.

The International Actors Federation (FIA) in London in particular was very active globally around employee rights and professional unions. But I was the head of a state-funded theatre system in this independent structure – the first person to be so. In this context, I saw preparing laws in this area to be a cultural necessity. Actors had the right to work as permanent staff in subsidised theatres until the age of 65 and then retire, a right obtained by being **Temporarily** bound to the **Civil Servant**

law No 657. But this law contradicted the intellectual property right – WIPO's intellectual property right law advocated producing ideas and making them the property of the idea owner. Law No 657 prohibited civil servants from producing ideas.

Under this law, actors, playwrights, and directors are obliged to do theatre. However, because their professions were not defined separately anywhere else, they were bound to this law in 1971. Their temporary adherence to this law still continues because there are no laws expressing their rights specifically in relation to their own profession. If something doesn't develop in relation to the State Theatres – which are the pioneers of Turkish Theatre – it affects the entire Turkish theatre, meaning that no one has specific rights relating to the acting profession in any matter, including professional rights and taxes. This situation reflects the lack of cultural development as far as legal issues are concerned in the Turkish theatre, which on the face of it appears developed. It is the self-sacrificing Turkish people who have suffered a great deal to ensure the survival of these professions which have no formal identity.

When this is combined with the general cultural deficiency experienced in all areas of life in Turkey, it's clear that the people of Turkey's dedication to the arts far exceeds what they get in return by way of support for the arts. In fact, their dedication is almost hindered due to these legal gaps. Many people who have received acting training cannot get acting work. Theatre, as a profession that mirrors the realities of society by actors sharing their life experiences, does not receive support befitting its historical importance.

However, this culture, whose essence is drama, can be used as an educational training system: drama in Education. All individuals can realise that they are an actor on the stage of life. In this sense, people who know themselves and others can communicate with each other carefully and meticulously. By appreciating their commonalities instead of being enemies, they can support each other. In a democratic culture, we achieve the principle of "individuals' ability to govern themselves" through individuals becoming aware of themselves and their similarities with others. On the subject of life being art, drama creates an opportunity for people to analyse the situation and identify communication problems. It enables people to evaluate information in a way that can be used in life, without just memorising it.

In Turkish etymology, the word 'oy' means to think. So 'voting' (oy atmak) in democratic elections means 'having an opinion.' So, in this sense, the word 'oyuncu' (player/gamer) would mean an intelligent person, not a person who does things without thinking or is some sort of imposter. So, the 'oyuncu' is the actor who clarifies situations. And in the word 'player' we can take the meaning that an actor must do what they do knowingly and by following the rules. Therefore, in the chaotic environment we live in today, there is a need for all people to be conscious actors of life and to realise this state of being an actor through 'art' culture. Acting in drama should be a culture of awareness not only for professionals, but for all actors of life. Understanding the dramatic should be examined not on an emotional level, but objectively, by examining the internal and external actions of actors, the roles they play in the situation, and their contributions to the development of the situation.

Art is the multidisciplinary name of this careful and meticulous approach. Using this approach, we should be able to produce solutions as foreseen by the common mind.

The relationship between art and the trades/professions which provide its visibility need to be redefined for the period we now live in. We need to create a brand-new vision of life based on the developments in the concept of art from past to present. This vision should propose acting together as art for a more livable world culture. If we had to give a name to this vision that will relate life disciplines to each other, it should be called 'Sanataevet' – Yes to Art.

Drama should be its most basic educational key. The people of Turkey show great altruism in embracing theatre. Theatre is a whole with its creators and the audience and this integrity is the stimulus of the artistic trait found in every human being. Those experiencing it (the audiences) feel valued and happy in the theatrical domain, in the dramas they participate in. Understanding and sharing brings them joy. The people of Turkey take an interest in theatre, despite it not having a legal identity and despite its development as a cultural form not being supported with the necessary educational policies, laws, and rigour. While interest in cinema decreased after the pandemic, interest in theatre increased. When intellectual property rights and its right to span all life are considered to be an artistic creation, theatre culture will find its identity. Theatre playwriting will achieve the self-confidence to update itself according to the age. Theatre directing and theatre acting can take a big step in transforming all that time lost before the age of artificial intelligence into the culture of the millennium.

These developments will serve theatre and drama's 'Cult of the Art of Living' of the age we live in. Theatre becomes a space where the art of living is rehearsed and where actors and experienced audiences evaluate life's problems together. The thoughts and imaginings of Sophocles, William Shakespeare, Bertold Brecht, Peter Brook and Muhsin Ertuğrul are what we really need in the age of artificial intelligence. People meet people once more. While we are advised to say "no" to everything, we say **Yes to Art**.

The ship *Kurtuluş*: Turkey's Humanitarian Aid to Greece in World War II

by Elçin Macar

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The interwar period was a time when the Italian and Bulgarian threats in the Mediterranean and the Balkans began to be felt. Both countries did not hide their expansionist ambitions. Finally, the Italian ambassador in Athens, reminding the

British military presence and bases in Greece, delivered an ultimatum to the Greek Prime Minister Metaxas in the early morning of October 28, 1940, demanding control of important regions. Metaxas' answer was "no". Thereupon, the Italian army in Albania began to occupy Greek territory.

The Turkish press praised the Greek army fighting against the Italians, saying "Greeks!, may your victory be blessed." Turkey was pleased with the success of the Greek soldiers against the Italians because the Greek army served as a buffer between Turkey and the invaders. During the 1939 Erzincan earthquake, Greece helped with a fundraising campaign, 700 thousand people gave money and two million drachmas were collected. This was also reported in the press.

After a while, even though the Italians were defeated, Germany intervened and Greece was occupied by a trilateral invasion (Germany, Italy, Bulgaria) in April 1941. Upon this development, the Greek King and members of his government went to Egypt and established the 'Greek Government in Exile' there. Then, at the request of Britain, the 'Royal Greek Army Command in the Middle East' was established in Egypt in June 1941. Many Greeks, most of whom had fled through Turkey during the occupation, would come under the command of this army to fight against the Axis. However, Rommel's advance in Libya unsettled the Egyptian Government, which became worried about incurring the wrath of the Germans. The King and the Government moved to South Africa that same month and shortly afterward to London. They would only return to Cairo in March 1943.

Famine symptoms

In the pre-occupation period, Greece was a major producer of tobacco, currants, raisins, wine, and olives in the Balkans. But it was always an importer of wheat and livestock.

In occupied Europe, Germany's standard policy was to seize all the exportable food stocks of the occupied country in the first few weeks. For this reason, Churchill declared in the House of Commons on August 21, 1940, that an economic embargo was one of the main weapons against all occupied territories and the Axis and began a blockade in the Mediterranean.

As soon as the occupation armies arrived, the first thing they did was to empty the country's silos and food stores. They even confiscated food from hospitals and humanitarian organizations. The result was famine, especially in Athens. Western Thrace and Eastern Macedonia, though an important agricultural center, were in the hands of the Bulgarian army. The population of Athens, flooded by Macedonian-Thracian immigrants fleeing the occupation there or already driven out by the Bulgarians, almost doubled. The Axis presented the famine as a consequence of the British blockade of the Mediterranean and proposed that it be lifted so that grain from outside Europe could reach Greece. The Greek delegation formally requested this from London on April 25, 1941. However, Britain was not willing to give up this important weapon.

Hitler's representative in Athens, Altenburg, drew Berlin's attention to the issue and urgently asked for aid from Germany or third countries. According to him, if the population had enough food, it would be possible to keep the calm. However, the view of the German authorities was quite the opposite: To deter resistance it was

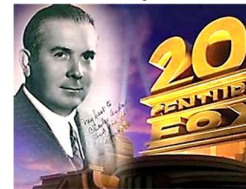
necessary to keep food shortages at a certain level! Besides, Greece was Italy's *Lebensraum* and could solve the problem on its own if it wanted to. Yet, while there was no shortage of wheat in Germany at this time, in Italy the daily bread ration had fallen to 150 grams per person.

News of the famine began to reach London in early June 1941. The reasons for the famine were explained as follows:

1. Italian, German, and Bulgarian occupation of the country.
2. Internal migration: Most of the rural population had migrated to the cities.
3. Great disorganization in internal communication and transportation. Destruction of train tracks and difficulties in obtaining fuel oil.
4. The confiscation of foodstuffs at the beginning of the occupation.
5. Imports from the Allied countries were cut off due to the blockade.

Greek-Americans in the United States began to press Washington, which in turn began to press London. The Greek government in exile in London also increased the pressure. At this point, beleaguered Britain looked for a formula to solve the problem "without breaking the blockade" and found the solution in imports from Turkey, which was both neutral and a Mediterranean country.

In the United States, the Greek War Relief Association (GWRA) volunteered to organize this work. Founded in November 1940, its president was Spyros Skuros, owner of National Theatres Inc. and 20th Century Fox. Britain's only condition was that the operation had to be carried out either through an Allied organization or through the GWRA. The money was to be transferred in dollars by the GWRA and the American Red Cross to the Greek government in London, which in turn would transfer it to the United Kingdom Commercial Corporation (UKCC), which would then pay Turkey in Turkish lira.



However, the situation in Greece was getting worse. Cholera broke out in Piraeus. In addition to wheat, the bread contained oats, barley, and millet, but it was distributed very little. In the cities, fruit, rice, and sugar had already run out. Tons of potatoes were rotting in Argos because they could not be transported to Athens. Tomatoes were selling for twenty times the normal price, zucchini for ten times. Cherries were also ten times more expensive; Attic cherries could only be transported to Athens by donkey because there was no gasoline. According to reports, nothing was available on Santorini except tomatoes and chickpeas, and grapes and olive oil on Samos. No bread had been seen in Santorini for a month. Foodstuffs were being brought to the island from Turkey through a special agreement with the Germans.

The situation in Greece in the Turkish press

In the summer of 1941, Turkish public opinion was talking about the plight of Greece. Ahmet Emin Yalman, editor-in-chief of *Vatan* newspaper, launched an aid campaign. In his article "We are a friend on a black day", he stated that "we must prove that we are a friend on a black day". Yalman recalled the sincere interest and help of both Greeks and Greek Americans during the Erzincan earthquake and wrote that Turkey should pay its spiritual debt from those days of disaster. Following the Tercan and Erzincan earthquakes in 1939, an aid campaign had been organized in Greece and

two million drachmas collected with the participation of 700 thousand people. Yalman suggested two ways to pay this moral debt: The first was for the Red Crescent to establish soup kitchens in Greece, especially for children, and the second was to take advantage of the friendship with Germany to make commercial shipments to Greece.

In *Cumhuriyet*, Yunus Nadi, in his article titled "Famine in Greece", emphasized that, even in hospitals, children could not be given even half of the milk they needed and that the suffering of this country should be reported especially to Britain and the USA, reminding them that South America was rich in grain. He stated that Europe, which was in trouble due to mutual blockades, could not come to Greece's aid, that this aid could only come from overseas, especially from South America, but that the British wanted to check whether the goods to be delivered to an occupied country were distributed to the Greek people, and that the Germans should accept this.

In Foreign Minister Şükrü Saracoğlu's letter to the Prime Minister's department dated September 15, 1941, it was stated that the ship that would deliver food to Greece would be the *Adana*, and the Greek Ambassador's request to put packages containing foodstuffs that Greek citizens and the Greeks of Istanbul wanted to send to their relatives and acquaintances in Greece on the same ship was also approved. In the meantime, however, it was announced that the ship would not be the *Adana*, but the *Kurtuluş* (Salvation), owned by the Taviloğlu family.

Since Turkey could not re-export at Britain's request, the foodstuffs it could export were also limited: potatoes, onions, pulses, eggs, salted wild boar meat, fresh and dried fish, dried fruit, etc.

Kurtuluş's first cargo consisted of 800 tons of pulses, 240 tons of onions, 45 tons of eggs, and fish paste purchased by the GWRA, as well as wheat, potatoes, fish, peas, wild boar meat, medical supplies, and clothing. The ship was decorated with Red Crescent symbols to protect it from being shot by British or German forces. On October 13, 1941, she set out on her first voyage with supplies to be distributed to hospitals and soup kitchens. The International Red Cross would handle the distribution. The *Kurtuluş* would sail during the day, spending the nights in the harbors of the islands to avoid bombs and submarines of the belligerents. Two days later, she arrived in Piraeus, passed through mined areas under the guidance of German boats, and was welcomed in the harbor with Turkish flags and great enthusiasm.

It was reported that 250,000 people were fed daily in soup kitchens and 14,000 children in orphanages were fed with eggs, beans, and salted tunny. The Turkish press reported the impressions of the journalists who traveled to Athens on the voyage of the *Kurtuluş* and revealed the famine in Athens. As the number of starvation deaths had increased dramatically, the Greek Medical Association asked the church for permission to cremate the corpses. This was for both sanitary reasons and because there was no wood to make coffins.

The *Kurtuluş* returning from the next expedition reported that the situation was now five times worse than three weeks earlier, with the Red Cross receiving up to 50 ambulance calls a day in Athens alone. The calls were always famine-related. Faruk Fenik, a journalist returning from the November voyage of the *Kurtuluş*, reported that

the crew insisted on leaving their rations in Greece and ate stale baked bread on the way back.

Famine

The population of Athens was estimated at 1,100,000 in 1941. Of this, 25-30% were demobilized soldiers. In the first winter of the occupation, mortality increased by 1500% a year, births fell by 70%. Food shortages were very demoralizing. Bread was rationed. In the winter of 1941-1942, the number of people fed in soup kitchens would increase from 80,000 to 700,000. There were no stray cats and dogs in Athens! Without them the streets were overrun with rats! Diphtheria and cholera hit children the most in Greece. The services in the hospitals were very limited due to the increase in the number of wounded and frozen German soldiers on the USSR front, Greek doctors were forced to go there. People died on the roads, sometimes abandoned on the street the night before by family members who wanted to use their ration cards. The municipality buried the bodies in the cemetery, often *en masse*. The problem was of such magnitude that trucks roamed the streets collecting bodies.

The BBC used it as a propaganda tool, claiming that 500,000 people had died in the winter of 1941-42. *The New York Times*, by the end of January 1942, was talking about 1,700 deaths a day. According to Mazower²⁷, this was exaggerated Greek and British propaganda. He writes that nearly 50,000 people had died in Athens-Piraeus in the year following October 1941, compared to 14,566 the previous year. He claims that the figure given can only be the total for the whole period of occupation.

The *Kurtuluş* had become "the only ray of hope" amid famine and misery. Every voyage of the ship was a big event. Sending personal parcels became more and more common during the voyages of the ship. Apart from the parcels sent by Greeks to their relatives, journalists were the first to provide such aid. This was followed by Istanbul Municipality employees, doctors, lawyers, and museum workers. Members of the Journalists' Association provided 60 tons of food and doctors 700 tons. Those who had close relatives in Greece could send certain food items once a month, with a value of ten liras and a weight not exceeding five kilograms. The parcels were delivered open and sealed after the customs procedures were followed by the Red Crescent.

The sinking of *Kurtuluş*

For the sixth voyage of the ship, the Turkish Press Association had organized an evening and allocated the proceeds to help Greek journalists. Journalists also prepared 350 five-kilogram packages of five kilos each for the journalists. On January 19, 1942, the *Kurtuluş* embarked on her sixth voyage. In addition to the packages of grain, her cargo of dried beans, chickpeas, salted tunny, potatoes, and onions also included 800 parcels loaded by the Greeks. Her total cargo was 1,800 tons. However, on January 20, before reaching the Aegean Sea, the ship ran aground on Marmara Island in the Sea of Marmara due to bad weather conditions,

²⁷ Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece-The Experience of Occupation 1941-1944*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 38-41

hitting rocks in a blizzard and storm, and sinking a few hours later. There were 24 crew members and 10 Red Crescent workers on board, including Rıdvan, the shipmaster. The entire crew was saved. The sinking of *Kurtuluş* caused great sadness in Greece. Athens-Piraeus spent the winter of 1941-42 almost entirely on food supplies from Turkey. The *Kurtuluş* carried 6,735 tons of food in five voyages.

The *Dumlupınar*, which replaced the *Kurtuluş*, arrived in Piraeus on February 25, 1942. In the sad atmosphere created by the sinking of the *Kurtuluş*, it was welcomed in Piraeus with cheers of "Jesus II". The crew was not charged for transportation in the city, in cinemas, in places of entertainment, and there was nothing but alcoholic beverages in the bars and restaurants.

The *Dumlupınar* would make five voyages between February and August 1942. From April onwards, potatoes and pulses became unavailable in Turkey, and in May, when the daily bread consumption per capita in Turkey was reduced to 150 grams, the public's reaction increased. As conditions in Turkey worsened, Britain began to ease the blockade, allowing the shipment of wheat from the Americas in the summer of 1942 when the Turkish government banned food exports.

The story of the photographs

According to Alekos Zannas, the head of the Greek Red Cross, one of the organizations that tried to fight hunger during this period, there were two reasons why the famine problem could not be solved: The Allies were not convinced that Greece was in a very bad situation and the British blockade. Feeling that something had to be done to convince the Allies, Zannas decided to create a photo album to show the disastrous situation in the winter of 1941-42. He was assisted by two expolicemen, one of whom took the photographs with a camera hidden in his hat, while the other helped him by hiding the photo flash. The negatives were developed at the police station. As a result, three albums were made. One was to be sent to the International Red Cross, one to the British Embassy in Switzerland, and the third to the Greek government in exile. The secretary of the head of the International Red Cross put his album in a drawer and forgot about it. Brunel, the representative of the International Red Cross in Athens, found it just three months later when he traveled to Geneva. The fate of the second album is unknown. The third album was delivered to Feridun Demokan, the Red Crescent representative on the *Kurtuluş*. According to Zannas, Demokan sent it to Greek Ambassador Rafail in Turkey, who forwarded it to the exile government in London.

However, this is described differently in Feridun Demokan's unpublished memoirs,

A Savior Sent by an "Old Foe",
Feridun Demokan, Notes on the
Great Famine in Greece

written in English and titled 'Great Gamble,' which I obtained from his family. Demokan claims that he requested the preparation of the photographs. "On my ninth trip, my friends in Athens informed me that they had finally prepared an album of one hundred and twenty photographs," Demokan says. "I kept one of the albums and gave the other to Colonel Gibson at a private luncheon at the Istanbul Club. Gibson was the special courier between Cairo, Ankara, and London. The album was to be sent to the United States by the British Intelligence Department." As a result, horrific photographs of the famine in Athens

were published in *Life* magazine in August 1942, making the world public aware of the conditions in Greece.

What started as the export of paid-for food on the *Kurtuluş* ship turned into a major aid campaign and has taken its place in the memories of Greeks over a certain age.

It was businessman Besim Tibuk, chairman of the board of NET Holding, who reminded the public of the *Kurtuluş* ship years later. On the 50th anniversary of the sinking, on February 21, 1992, he organized a memorial ceremony at the Dolmabahçe pier. Andreas Politakis, the founder of the Abdi İpekçi Peace and Friendship Award, also gave a speech and pointed out that the younger generations were unaware of this issue. With this initiative, Tibuk was among the recipients of the 1992 Abdi İpekçi Award.

In 2006, with the support of the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce, Erhan Cerrahoğlu made a documentary on the story of the *Kurtuluş*. Shipwreck expert Selçuk Kolay and his team dived into the wreck and revealed that it had been dynamited and sold to scrap dealers.



Elçin Macar's book on the *Kurtuluş*, based on official documents, was published by the Izmir Chamber of Commerce in 2009. Years later, Mustafa Taviloğlu, the owner of the famous Turkish company Mudo and a member of the family that used to own the *Kurtuluş*, had the book re-published.

The *Kurtuluş*, the forgotten symbol of Turkish-Greek friendship, was thus saved from disappearing among the 'dusty pages of history' and brought back to the attention of the public.



Turkologentag 2023

and the Evolving Landscape of Turkish Area Studies

an overview by
Kübra Uygur

Turkologentag 2023 marked a significant milestone in Turkish area studies, standing as the fourth iteration of the European Convention organised in collaboration with the Society for Turkic, Ottoman, and Turkish Studies (GTOT). Evolving from the original 'German Turkologists Conference' over a quarter of a century ago, GTOT has held the event since 2014. This year's edition, hosted by the Department of Near Eastern Studies (Turkish and Central Asian Studies) at the University of Vienna, was notable for being the first held outside Germany, and coincided with the centennial of the Turkish Republic. Drawing an unprecedented number of around 800 participants from over 50 countries and featuring more than 200 panels, the three-day

conference vividly illustrated the dynamic growth and increased global interest in Turkish area studies. +

For the first time in a conference of this scale, the concept of writing Turkish in non-Turkish alphabets during the Ottoman period received substantial attention through dedicated panel discussions. Among these, Armeno-Turkish studies, a relatively recently explored scholarly field, stood out due to its considerable number of submissions and the in-depth explorations conducted by scholars from various countries. *TAS Review* is exploring the possibility of publishing an online special issue dedicated to the presentations made on Armeno-Turkish studies at Turkologentag 2023.

This overview aims to inform about the general content and thematic richness of Turkologentag 2023. As it is challenging to encapsulate the entirety of such a wide-ranging academic assembly, the endeavour is to capture the diversity in topics discussed to contribute to the ongoing discourse in Turkic, Ottoman, and Turkish studies. For further information, please visit <https://www.gtot.org/wien-2023>.

Historical Studies and Reflections

The core of Turkologentag 2023 was defined by a strong examination of historical narratives that construct the intricate mosaic of Turkic, Ottoman, and Turkish studies. Panels illuminated the past with a thorough examination of historiography, cultural productions, religious practices, social dynamics, and architectural marvels. Panels such as 'Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Concepts of Political Modernity' and 'The Christians' Ottoman Empire' brought to light the nuanced understanding of political, social, and cultural transformations within the Empire. By exploring shifts in Ottoman concepts of freedom, republicanism, and intellectualism, these discussions both revisited the empire's complex history and emphasised the fluidity of historical narratives and the agency of diverse actors within them.

The panels examining historical texts, literary productions, and cultural expressions revealed the rich tapestry of Ottoman and early Turkish Republic periods. The intersection of literary creativity with socio-political changes was vividly depicted through panels that explored the role of authors in the 19th-century Ottoman printing enterprise and the impact of script reform on Turkish historiography. This thematic cluster drew attention to the interplay between language, literature, and identity formation. Additionally, in '*Language, Literature, and Cultural Production in History*,' the conference illuminated the Ottoman Empire's linguistic and literary diversity through focused discussions. Notably, panels discussing Armenian, Armeno-Turkish, Greek and Karamanlidika texts spotlighted the cultural and literary diversity. Similarly, the panel '*Persian Lexicography as Cultural History: The Ottoman Empire and Beyond*' probed into the significant role of Persian language learning and its usage. These discussions collectively emphasised the Empire's vibrant literary and cultural productions, exploring the evolution of language use, literary forms, and genres, thereby providing a deeper understanding of the historical intricacies and the intellectual legacy of the Ottoman Empire and the early Turkish Republic.

The historical landscape of religious and spiritual practices within the Ottoman domain was dissected through panels on Sufism and the transformation of Alevi religious education, highlighting the spiritual richness of the region and traced the evolution of religious teachings and practices in response to societal shifts,

illustrating the adaptive nature of spiritual traditions. Additionally, the conference ventured into the significant yet often overlooked narratives within Kurdish studies, through panels such as *'Kurdish Turn?' Rethinking memory and history of Collective Violence through Kurdish Studies.* This panel brought to the forefront the pivotal role of Kurdish studies in dissecting mass violence within Ottoman and post-Ottoman contexts, challenging conventional narratives to unveil the diverse experiences and identities in Kurdish history. Panels - such as *'Social Status and Self-image of Old and New Social Groups in the Late Ottoman Empire'* and *'Social Structures and Identity Formations'* explored the transformations of social groups, gender roles, and identity constructions through the lens of military officers, medical professionals, and theatre entrepreneurs, offering a window into the processes of self-image creation and social negotiation, mirroring the broader dynamics of social change.

The exploration of architectural and urban developments within the Empire and Republic was also a significant focus, highlighted through discussions on architectural history of the early modern period and the transformation of Ankara into a capital city. These panels shed light on how architectural design and urban planning offer insights into the intricate relationship between the built environment and societal evolution. The keynote presentation by Professor Edhem Eldem titled "Ottoman and Turkish Studies in 2023: The Good, the Bad, and the (Un)Likely," was also noteworthy providing a comprehensive evaluation of current Ottoman and Turkish studies.

Contemporary Studies and Debates

Turkologentag 2023 offered a comprehensive exploration of contemporary dynamics within Turkey and the broader Turkic world, touching on the intersections of politics, culture, and society. Panels like *'Family and Youth in Turkey'* provided empirically grounded insights into how the AKP's policies have influenced family structures and the younger demographic.

The impact of Turkish television dramas, discussed comprehensively in the *'Dizi-Power: the socio-political impact of Turkish Television drama'* panel, indicated their role beyond entertainment. These dramas shape perceptions of Turkey in various cultural contexts, directing stereotypes and fostering cultural dialogues. This discussion emphasised the dizi industry's significant role in the socio-political climate of contemporary Turkey, acting as a mirror to the operational dynamics within the industry and its influence on societal norms and perceptions.

The evolving labour landscape under authoritarianism and neoliberalism was critically examined in *'Labor control, workers' subjectivity, and protest in authoritarian neoliberal Turkey.'* The panel introduced discussions on how these political and economic frameworks affect labour control mechanisms, catalysing new forms of worker protests and mobilisations in response to economic crises and the pandemic. Exploring national and Islamic identities in Turkey, panels discussed the ongoing discourse and negotiations between Turkish nationalism and Islamic heritage. The conversations highlighted the diverse movements and actors engaged in shaping the modern Turkish identity.



The conference also probed contemporary cultural and literary trends, tracing the historical trajectory and current manifestations of gender politics in panels like '*A Century of Gender Equality Struggles in Turkey – Feminist History Revisited*'. These discussions linked historical struggles for gender equality to contemporary cultural expressions. Religious dynamics in modern Turkish society were also examined, addressing the coexistence of Sunni Islam with confessional minorities and secular currents. The panel '*Research on Religion in Turkish Studies. An Historiographical and Epistemological Approach*' offered a re-evaluation of religious phenomena, providing insights into the evolving nature of religious education and the emotional dimensions of religious and national identities.

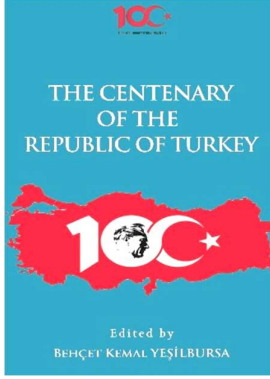
Turkologentag 2023 offered insights into the cultural heritage and linguistic diversity found across Central Asia and acknowledged the distinct area of Kurdish studies. Discussions on the oral traditions and cultural transformations in Central Asia examined social texts, cultural icons, and the interplay between modernity and tradition, highlighting the relevance of these regions within the broader context of Turkic studies. Separate panels dedicated to Kurdish studies examined Kurdish identity and political representation, facilitating a deeper understanding of the unique cultural, political, and social dynamics of Kurdish communities.

Turkologentag 2023, through its rich array of panels and discussions, not only commemorated the centennial of the Turkish Republic but also signified a broader academic engagement with the diverse narratives that shape the Turkic world. The interdisciplinary approach adopted by scholars from around the globe facilitated a comprehensive exploration of themes ranging from the legacies of script reform and linguistic diversity to the nuances of modern political and social dynamics within Turkey and beyond. Notably, the conference's dedication to highlighting underexplored areas reflects a commitment to deepening the understanding and exploration of the Ottoman Empire's multiethnic, multicultural, and multilingual heritage.

The contemporary dynamics segment underscored the complexity of modern Turkey's socio-political landscape and illuminated the ongoing transformations and challenges within Turkish society. Expanding its gaze to the Central Asian Turkic realm, the conference brought to the forefront the rich oral traditions, cultural icons, and the delicate balance between modernity and tradition that define the region.

In conclusion, Turkologentag 2023, through its multidisciplinary and comprehensive program, has significantly contributed to advancing the discourse in Turkic, Ottoman, and Turkish Studies. The conference facilitated a deeper understanding of the intricate mosaic of historical and contemporary narratives and fostered a space for scholarly exchange and collaboration. As the field continues to evolve, the insights and research shared at this gathering will undoubtedly influence future explorations and academic endeavours, reinforcing the importance of an inclusive and expansive approach to studying the rich tapestry of the Turkic world. Looking ahead, the next Turkologentag is scheduled for 2025 at the University of Mainz, promising another opportunity for scholars to converge and further this critical dialogue.

Book Reviews & Publications



The Centenary of the Republic of Turkey (1923-2023)

edited by **Behçet Kemal Yeşilbursa**
 Çanakkale, PA Paradigma Akademi Yayınları, 2023
 397+ xi pp. Maps, illustrations, bibliography, index.
 ISBN: 978-625-6579-13-2. Paperback



Turkey today is a different country than it was in 1923, although it has immense problems with its political system, implementation of the rule of law, human rights, and polarisation along ideological and cultural lines. It has been governed for the previous two decades by an increasingly populist-authoritarian regime that has openly rejected some of the foundational principles of the Republic.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's government chose to mark the momentous occasion of the Republic's first century as modestly as possible. Some argue that this understated celebration was an attempt to undermine the legacy of Atatürk and promote the government's Islamic roots over the secular foundation upon which the Republic was built; but regardless of political affiliations and personal beliefs, the citizens of Turkey came together to honour the memory of Atatürk and the legacy of the Republic. Across the country, citizens held their own private celebrations. The devotion of the public to the memory of Atatürk and the ideals of the Republic were remarkable, which bore hope that Turkey may continue as a secular Republic.

There have been only a few books published in 2023 in honour of the 100 years of the Turkish Republic and this volume is one of them. Contributions are by international scholars, some very well-known and some at the start of their careers, but what makes this book different is that all contributors have written either on an aspect of Turkey and Anatolia or on a related topic they have been working on, and mostly on neglected topics. In the Preface the editor Yeşilbursa states the aim of the book is

'to help us comprehend the transformation that Turkey has undergone. Specifically, how it started in 1923, what role Atatürk played, and why he is still held in high regard in Turkey today. My hope is for this volume to assist us in understanding the change that has taken place over the first hundred years of the Republic'.

Fabio L Grassi's *The Founder of the Republic: Kemal Atatürk*, gives an outline of Atatürk's life, his successes and reforms both as a soldier and a statesman stressing the lesser known facts and international events.

William Hale in *The Presidency in Turkey, 1923-2023* gives a succinct and excellent summary of the Republic, its presidents, and the presidency debate, but ends his contribution with a somewhat pessimistic warning about Turkey's future after the 2028 elections:

'in 2023 it was clear that the status and powers of the president would continue to be a crucial and controversial issue in Turkey for many years to come, as they had been for the previous century.'(p 59)

Ayla Göl in *The Abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate and Positioning of the new Turkey in International Relations* demonstrates the complex interdependency between domestic and international relations at the end of the First World War and why the origins of the 'caliphate question' were embedded in centuries of rivalries among Arabs, Turks, Indian Muslims, and European colonial powers. In *From the Covert Agreement to the "Lausanne Moment": Three Destinations before the New Global Order*, Özge Aslanmirza explains how 'the Treaty of Lausanne is the cumulative "moment" of the collection of diplomatic memories and the moments of the ultimate decision-making process among the parties involved while it propounded a new tune concerning the balance of power.' Her maps are especially helpful. (p 108)

Turkey's Neutrality during the Second World War and its Consequences by F Rezzan Ünalp, details how Turkey – after Germany's occupation of Poland (September 1939) and Iran (August 1941) – feared befalling the same fate. Fortunately, Hitler's decision to attack Russia in June 1941 averted this potential threat. After the Second World War, relations with the Soviet Union became the most important consideration affecting Turkey's foreign policy.

Ayed Khedher in *Tunisians and Kemalism: In Quest of a Refined Modernist Revolution* gives a comprehensive account of relations between Tunisia and Turkey in the person of Mustafa Kemal, and that

'the nuanced degrees of interaction of Tunisians public and elites – with Kemalist reforms finally confirmed the assumption that social and political reform is a long process of change of mentalities, ideas, ethics, and social conduct more than an abrupt 'downloading' of ready-made modes of behaviour into a society that has already established its most compatible frames of references for political and social performance in this world.' (p 216)

Jack Snowden, who is well-known for his translations into English of forgotten and neglected documents of Turkish history (<https://jacksnowden.academia.edu/>), gives his own journey and samples of interesting documents in *An Accidental Turk and Adventures with Ottoman Turkish*. Liliana Boşcan in *Diplomatic and Economic Relations between the Kingdom of Romania and the Republic of Turkey during the Atatürk Period (1923-1938)* provides the readers with a detailed history of diplomatic and economic relations between the two countries based on documents and figures.

Another interesting contribution is by Lajos Négyesi: *Legend and Reality – Contribution of Hungarian Military Men in the Establishment of the Republic of Turkey*. The author details how 'Hungarian artillerymen fought in Palestine and technical soldiers operated the Syrian railway.' And how, from 1923, many Hungarian professionals worked in Turkey and returned home with positive experiences. In that time in Hungary, Kemal Atatürk was highly respected, and the

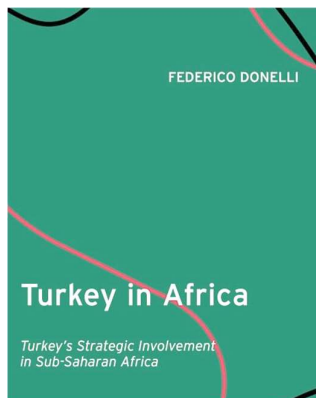
Turkish people were seen as a kindred nation.’ Maps and photographs are especially valuable.

John F. Healey, in *Ancient Edessa (Şanlıurfa) and Aramaic in the Context of Roman Syria*, focuses on one of the border regions of Turkey, Şanlıurfa/Ancient Edessa and its immediate surrounding area, in the Roman period, a topic which has been extensively studied since the foundation of the Republic. Again the article is accompanied by interesting maps and photographs. Peter B. Golden, well-known for his histories of Turkey, this time writes on the Khazars, in *Some Reflections on the Present State of Khazar Studies*. A section well worth reading as the Khazars continue to hold their mystery to date. Finally a comparative study comes from Harumi Arai in *Women’s Status in Türkiye and Japan during the Modernization Processes*.

The book is accompanied by maps and photographs and an Index, and each contribution has an excellent bibliography section.

Çiğdem Balım

Emerita, Indiana University



Turkey in Africa

Turkey’s Strategic Involvement in Sub-Saharan Africa

by **Frederico Donelli**

London Bloomsbury, 2022

ISBN 9780755636983

(paperback ed), 216 pp.

Frederico Donelli’s book provides a detailed and quite comprehensive account of Turkey’s involvement in the sub-Saharan region, in particular Somalia. The principal goal of the book as explained in the introduction is to highlight Turkey’s ‘multidirectional foreign policy’ in Africa ‘through a distinct approach’, different than ‘other emerging powers that have set their relations with Africa solely on economic-commercial dimension’. Through seven detailed chapters, Introduction and Conclusion, the book seeks to present ‘the distinctive traits of Turkey’s strategy towards the continent’. ‘Turkey represents a new reality in the African context that can compete with other emerging middle powers’.



From the late 1990s, Turkey has been considered to be part of a group of fast-rising economies, or emerging powers that have been challenging the dominance of the old established powers that are dropping down the international pecking order. In this

tectonic shift, China and India, and perhaps others such as Brazil, Russia, Indonesia and South Africa, have the potential to render obsolete the old categories of East and West, North and South, aligned and non-aligned, and developed, underdeveloped and developing. Brazil, Russia, India, China and perhaps South Africa (so-called BRICS) are considered the most significant powers of this group of emerging stars. Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea and Turkey (so-called MIST) are viewed as next in line after the BRICS. Emerging powers are national economies that are transitioning from a closed- to an open-market system while investing in more productive capacity. They are moving away from their traditional economies that have relied on agriculture and the export of raw materials and are growing faster than other developing countries. An emerging power has increased power beyond the borders of the state and possesses the capacity for regional and global influence. It typically has a relatively large population, covers a relatively large geographical area, and realizes, on average, a relatively high level of economic growth above regional and global levels, over a longer period. Although emerging powers are more developed than traditional countries, which depend on agricultural products or the importation of raw materials, they do not satisfy the standards of a developed economy. Although economic growth rates are much higher than in developed countries, they have still much lower per capita income.

The rise of the middle powers has major implications for regional power dynamics, particularly in the Middle East and Africa for Turkey. Powers such as Turkey seek to consolidate their economic position and assert their political influence in the international system. They predominantly do so through a regionally focused geo-economic and geopolitical strategy, which is organized around measures such as economic cooperation, systematic investment, development aid as well as security collaboration with the other countries. For instance, Brazil sees the rest of Latin America as a strategic place for trade and the construction of political hegemony. Accordingly, Brazil is at the forefront of arrangements to liberalize trade in the region (e.g. MERCOSUR, a South American trade bloc) and has become heavily involved in regional investments in infrastructure. These measures are coupled with 'soft power' initiatives to bolster social development in neighbouring countries and project ideological leadership in social policymaking.

Turkey is considered by a majority of sources, in the 21st century, as an emerging middle power because it has a large and young population and it has considerable ability to act independently, to resist pressure from great powers and to exert substantial influence in regional matters. Turkey has significantly increased its presence in international politics over the past two decades and has sought to extend its global reach. Since the end of the Cold War, Turkish policymakers have portrayed it as an emerging middle power that is playing a pivotal role in shaping regional politics in a fast-changing world order. Becoming a middle power and a regional leader has been seen by many Turkish authors and decision-makers as a natural step of progression in the post-Cold War era. For instance, Ahmet Davutoğlu (former foreign minister and prime minister) described Turkey as a 'pivotal state', or 'geopolitical pivot', emphasizing that it can have a greater say in global governance because of its location, with access to both the Global North and the Global South.

This book succeeds in providing a comprehensive interpretation of Turkey's relations in Africa, based on many available official sources and a rich secondary literature.

Overall, this is a very useful general source to understand what Turkey is doing in Africa. However, I have some concerns regarding a number of details presented in the book. For instance, the claim introduced in the introduction about the uniqueness of Turkey's Africa policy is not explained convincingly. The only explanation of this 'unique' approach is 'multidimensional framework of engagement' based on Turkey's historical and cultural links with the continent (p 13). In chapter 5, the author introduces the 'Ankara Consensus' and 'Erdoğan Doctrine', explaining both how unique and multidimensional Turkey's Africa policy is. In my opinion this is a rather forced argument based on a simplified understanding of other powers' Africa policy to prove that Turkey's foreign relations in Africa are different than those of all other emerging powers. The claim that other emerging powers 'have set their relations with Africa solely on an economic-commercial dimension' is an obvious simplification. For instance, Brazil has extensive links in the African continent, in particular West Africa, where many countries share much more than a language (Portuguese) and cultural similarities; they also share similar geological and climate conditions, diplomatic relationships, trade and business relationships, and a shared ocean in the South Atlantic. The Brazilian Navy works with key African nations in areas of training programs, exercises, and conferences to support increased maritime awareness and security. The Brazilian Marine Corps currently maintains an advisory group in Namibia and São Tomé and Príncipe focused on the establishment of those nations' Marine Corps and capacity building. Additionally, the Brazilian Navy and Marine Corps conduct several training events throughout Africa to share knowledge and skills.

Similarly, Russian military, cultural and trade links are well-documented in Africa, in particular in the Sahel region. Despite its military struggles in Ukraine, Russia has not cut back its ambitions in Africa. Over the last two years, Moscow doubled down its focus on Africa's Sahel region, from Senegal to the Red Sea. Through the infamous Wagner mercenary group, Moscow is inserting itself in countries such as Mali and Burkina Faso and is taking advantage of Western policy missteps and growing anti-European sentiment. During the same period, the trade turnover between Russia and African countries increased by almost 35%. The largest emerging economy, China, has been Africa's largest trading partner since 2009 when it surpassed the United States, and continues to be by far its largest trading partner. In addition to its trade links, China has manifested military involvements in many African countries, in the areas of military training and assistance, arms sales, anti-piracy and peacekeeping operations.

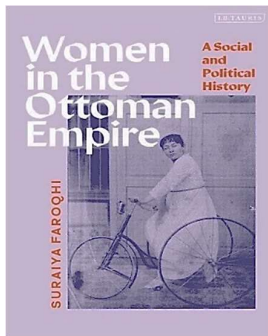
Another area where the book falls short on developing is Turkey's response to Arab Spring events of 2011, in particular the way the Turkish state changed its stand towards the Western intervention in Libya against Gaddafi in 2011. This book is not about Libya, it is about Sub-Saharan Africa, but I believe the Libyan episode is significant to understand the way Turkey's Africa policy was shaped after 2011. The book briefly talks about these events and 'post-Arab Spring shift in Turkish foreign policy' (p 94) and 'post-Arab Spring era' (p 129), but without even mentioning the fall of Gaddafi regime in Libya. Erdoğan and Davutoğlu were initially optimistic about the Arab Spring events and thought that they would create better conditions in Africa for Turkey to expand its trade and investment and establish close links with the emerging structures. The expectation was that the protest movements would change the autocratic regimes quite quickly and open the region up to close neighbourly

collaboration that would be mutually beneficial for Turkey and the countries in the region. At first, they saw no need for Turkey's active involvement when the protests against the regimes continued and were against any outside involvement, opposing UN sanctions on the Gaddafi regime in Libya and rejecting calls for NATO operations in support of the anti-regime forces. Erdoğan, then Turkey's prime minister, said that it would be absurd, unthinkable, and useless to intervene in Libya and that doing so would have dangerous consequences; he believed that the Libyan people should decide the fate of their own country. But then Turkey's foreign policy towards Libya did a complete U-turn. Turkey approved the NATO operations, with some reservations, and called for Gaddafi's resignation. Five Turkish navy ships and a submarine were dispatched to help enforce the arms embargo against Gaddafi's regime, and the Turkish parliament even approved sending troops if necessary. One reason suggested for this reversal of position, albeit reluctant, was the 30,000 Turkish citizens living and/or working in Libya. In the pro-government press it was also explained as 'Turkey wanting NATO to command the Libya mission in order to be able to limit allied operations against the country's infrastructure and avoid the casualties among Muslim civilians that it fears could result from bombing raids'. (*Daily Sabah*, 25 March 2011) After Gaddafi was captured and killed and a temporary authority was put in place with the direct help of NATO, Erdoğan visited Tripoli; he attended Friday prayers at Tripoli's Martyr Square, met the chairman of the Libyan National Traditional Council and congratulated the Libyan people for bringing the age of tyranny and dictatorship to an end (Al-Jazeera 16 September 2011). The entire oil-rich country was, however, mired in chaos soon after, with rival authorities and a multitude of militias vying for control. Gaddafi's overthrow and death left a void in the whole continent, which has yet to be filled. The fall of Gaddafi's regime sent shockwaves through the region. The intervention in Libya was important to the African continent, and Turkey's involvement in the Western intervention is important to understand Turkey's Africa policy after 2011. The way Turkish military involved in the intervention contributed significantly to the entry of the Turkish defence industrial complex into the African continent. Turkey's foreign relation shifted in the period after 2011 significantly from traditional non-interference (zero problem with the neighbours) to involvement in other countries.

Notwithstanding a few points of criticism, this volume provides a useful introduction to Turkey's relations in Sub-Saharan Africa. It provides considerable food for thought particularly in relation to the following key questions:

- How does Turkey place itself in the African context to local and external stakeholders? and
- What are the distinctive traits of Turkey's strategy towards the continent?

Bülent Gökay
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Women in the Ottoman Empire: A Social and Political History

by Suraiya Faroqhi
London: I.B Tauris, 2023
ISBN 9780755638284

In her latest book, Suraiya Faroqhi, eminent historian of the Ottoman Empire, delves into the lives of Ottoman women as social agents who navigated through the social, legal, and economic obstacles intrinsic to the highly patriarchal yet evolving gender order of Ottoman society between the 16th and 20th centuries. Growing out of Faroqhi's class-notes while teaching a graduate course, during the pandemic, on Ottoman women, the book reflects a remarkable command of burgeoning scholarly literature on the history of women in the Ottoman Empire. The main thread through Faroqhi's broad overview of more than four hundred years of Ottoman women's history is the concept of agency. Defining it as a woman's "capacity to act within the structural constraints of the society that she inhabited, to pursue her own goals and the well-being of those close to her" (p 2), Faroqhi aims to highlight women's often undervalued contributions to the making of the Ottoman polity.

The book is divided into three main parts. Part I, which focuses on the 16th and 17th centuries, the period when the Ottoman Empire emerged as a world power, has three chapters. Chapter 2 introduces the legal framework of family life. Faroqhi provides a survey of the opportunities for women's agency within the religious laws that governed their lives, as well as the limits of those opportunities. The reader is walked through the diversity of women's experiences of marriage and divorce in the Ottoman legal terrain, which varied according to the class, belonged, and the following two chapters and diversity in and their intellectual examines cases of them from the according to the class, belonged, and the following two chapters and diversity in and their intellectual examines cases of them from the



Part II expands upon the theme of diversity as the empire was transformed by the significant economic, social and political changes occurring from the 18th century onwards. Faroqhi's discussion of women's lives in this second phase of Ottoman women's history from 1700 to 1870 revolves around the differences in social relations between the Arab provinces, on the one hand, and the central provinces of the empire, on the other. While the book maintains that a sharp contrast between an Arab model of *condition féminine* and a Turkish one, which was common among the

narratives of nationalist historians of earlier generations, cannot be substantiated, it nevertheless directs attention to the significantly disparate “social environments” within which women had to function in the Arab provinces and the central ones. Focusing on Ottoman Syria and Egypt, Chapter 5 provides an account of how early Islamisation affected women’s lives differently in cities like Aleppo, Damascus, and Cairo through the long-term survival of urban aristocracies and the power of wealthy households, for both of which strategic marriages were critical. Faroqhi points out, for example, that the “wives and daughters of Anatolian and Balkan notables did not achieve even a fraction of the wealth and power accessible to the most fortunate females of Cairo’s military households” (p 103). At the same time, there were indeed notable distinctions between Ottoman Syria and Egypt, as well as within a single province and between town and countryside, when it came to opportunities open or closed to women. Such local diversities were also evident in the central provinces of the empire, which are the focus of Chapter 6. The book concludes that for women in 18th to 19th century Anatolia, Istanbul and the Balkans, the impact of institutionalization, bureaucratization, and the advent of dependent capitalism was much more profound than it was in the Arab provinces.

The final part of the book focuses on the period after 1870, the last half century of the empire when “defensive modernisation,” as Faroqhi frames it, fundamentally altered the social and economic conditions and prospects of Ottoman women. Markedly contrasting this period from previous ones was women’s growing access to education and visibility in public life, at least in Istanbul and other major urban centres of the empire. Although the three chapters in this part carefully delineate how the impact of modernisation on women’s lives sharply differed along class lines, providing mainly elite and middle-class women an increased capacity and space to manoeuvre patriarchal norms, they also highlight the opportunities that opened for even women of lower classes through education and social aid. Chapter 8, for example, summarizes the ways in which the establishment of the Darülmüallimat (a teachers training college) in Istanbul not only increased women’s role as professionals in the Ottoman society, but also had unintended consequences by producing some prominent women teachers who were vocal about women’s rights in the Ottoman press and associational life. Chapters 9 and 10 trace the survival strategies of women from the lower classes, whose lives were dramatically affected by changing relations of production, the emergence of modern discourses and technologies around reproduction, and the devastating effects of the Balkan Wars and World War I. Special sections are devoted to the atrocities and violence Armenian women faced during the 1915 ‘deportations’, and the miseries of Muslim women refugees from the Balkans and Kurdish women who were forced to resettle in western and central Anatolia because of the empire’s demographic engineering policies. Part III highlights the expanded space for women’s agency in the last fifty years of the empire’s life thanks to the ‘defensive modernisation’ of the 19th and early 20th centuries. However, it also hints at how that space was enjoyed by some groups of women, mainly from Muslim middle classes, more than (and perhaps also at the expense of) others.

Overall, *Women in the Ottoman Empire* provides an informative and comprehensive survey of Ottoman women’s strategies of empowerment and survival. It does this by tracing how family relations, social aid and paid work occasionally opened spaces for women from the 16th to the early 20th centuries, as well as the structural constraints

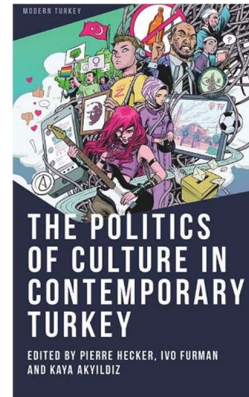
that limited those occasions. It would be particularly helpful for those looking for a guide to the sources available to students of women and gender in the Ottoman Empire and the most prominent topics of inquiry and debates in the scholarly literature. The book's discussion of the limitations of the existing historical data and the questions that remain due to those limitations would be especially useful for newcomers to the field who would like to learn about the gaps in the scholarship. The book also includes a Timeline, Glossary, and a valuable Suggestions for Further Reading section, which would benefit readers who are not scholars of the subject but would like to avail themselves of a wide-ranging yet meticulous introduction.

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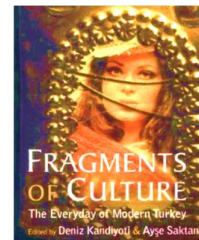
The Politics of Culture in Contemporary Turkey

edited by **Pierre Hecker, Ivo Furman and Kaya Akyıldız**
Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2023
340+ xxvpp. Illustrations, index.
ISBN: 978-1-4744-9029-0. Paperback



“Here we go! Speeding away from ‘Old Turkey’. It is time to do away with the rule of those rootless, upper class ‘White Turks’, disrespectful to our traditions and beliefs.” (p1) This is how Hecker, Furman and Akyıldız start their remarkable section, which also serves as the introduction to the volume. Here they also outline the joint theoretical approach of the book, which makes it more than a collection of articles by authors from different disciplines on the different aspects of the rise of authoritarianism and decline of democracy in Turkey. The volume follows the British tradition of Cultural Studies, prominently the work of researchers like Stuart Hall.

The ‘New Turkey’ or ‘Türkiye’ since the name was changed in 2022 aims to restore the imagined greatness of the Ottomans and replace the secularist modernity of the country with pious conservatism. However, the democratic breakdown and extreme polarisation of society did not happen suddenly. And this is where the editors tie the present volume with the 2002 book *Fragments of Culture: The Everyday of Modern Turkey* (edited by D Kandiyoti and A Saktanber), which provided insight into the social and cultural transformation of life in Turkey. It was published immediately before Erdoğan and the AKP came to power, twenty years before the present volume, which ‘aims to fill a gap which has emerged



in the field of contemporary Turkish cultural studies since the publication of *Fragments of Culture*.'

After a summary of the past twenty years of Turkish political and social history, the book is organised in five sections. Under **Part I**, 'Subcultures and the Politics of Lifestyles', Ivo Furman writes about attitudes towards alcohol in 'New Turkey', which has been made into a divisive issue, and also how it has become an example of intervening in people's private lives and choices. Douglass Mattsson in 'Spreading VX Gas Over Kaaba: Islamic Semiotics in Turkish Black Metal' explores blasphemy and the cultural dominance of pious conservatism. Pierre Hecker's 'Tired of Religion: Atheism and Non-Belief in 'New Turkey' discusses being an atheist in Turkey and its individual consequences.

Part II is 'Satire and Agitprop in 'New Turkey'. John Carney in 'Democra-Z: Election Propaganda, a Failed Coup and Zombie Politics in 'New Turkey', discusses a bizarre election video by the ruling party AKP, with borrowed scenes from a zombie movie *World War Z*, and its metaphorical possible meaning. Can Evren discusses another propaganda video released before the 2017 referendum in 'United against the Referee: Competitive Authoritarianism, Soccer and the Remaking of Nationalism in Erdoğanist Turkey'. Valentina Marcella in 'Between Resistance and Surrender: Counter Hegemonic Discourses in Turkish Satirical Magazines', uses samples from the *Girgir*, *Penguen*, *Leman* and *Uykusuz* magazines during the summer of Gezi, and how they challenged the government's narrative through satire.

Part III is about 'Civil Society and the Politics of Gender'. This section contains two contributions on women and one on ecological activism. Although interesting in their own right, the contributions fall short of presenting the serious problems of women and gender rights in Turkey. Gülşen Çakıl-Dinçer, based on her fieldwork with KADEM (the pro-government womens' rights association), explores 'New Turkey's idea of an ideal woman as opposed to egalitarian feminist in 'The Boundaries of Womanhood in 'New Turkey'. Ayşe Çavdar in 'Never Walk Alone: The Politics of Unveiling in 'New Turkey', discusses the recent case of some women from conservative families who unveil, challenging the hegemony of pious conservatism. In the same part of the book Julia Lazarus looks at ecological activism in her 'Welcome to Dystopia. A View into the Counter-hegemonic Discourse(s) of Ecological Activism in Istanbul'.



Part IV is titled 'Mediating Neo-Ottomanism in Popular Culture'. In 'New Histories for 'New Turkey': The First Battle of Kut (1916) and the Reshaping of the Ottoman Past' Burak Onaran discusses a case of popular re-imagination of the Ottoman past; and in 'Between Invention and Authenticity: Representations of Abdülhamit II in the TV Series *Payitaht*' Caner Tekin discusses the series and the references it makes to contemporary politics in Turkey: the character of Abdülhamit II in the TV fiction is Erdoğan in the 'New Turkey'. Diliara Brileva discusses the same subject of reinventing history and glorifying the past with reference to mainstream versus Art House Films in 'Writing a Visual History of Turkey: "Glorious History" in Mainstream Cinema versus 'Complicated History' in Art House Films'. The reinvention of an imaginary Ottoman past is explored in the context of urban planning by Petek Onur

in 'The Politics of Nostalgia: The New Urban Culture in Ankara's Historic Neighbourhoods'.

The last section of the book (**Part V**) offers three interesting cases of how the state deals with minorities under the title 'New Turkey's' Ethno-religious Others. Kaya Akyıldız in 'The Affirmation of Sunni Supremacism in Erdoğan's 'New Turkey'' explores the government's discriminatory and shameful politics towards the Alevi in Turkey. Erol Sağlam's most interesting "Because They would Misunderstand': Romeyka Heritage and the Masculine Reconfigurations of Public Culture in Contemporary Turkey', looks at the ancient Greek (Romeyka)-speaking Muslim community in Trabzon based on his ethnographic field research. In the **final** contribution of the book 'A Politics of Presence: Public Performances of Roma Belonging in Istanbul', Danielle V Schoon looks at the ambiguous relationship between the state and the Roma population in Turkey, which ranges from incorporation to resistance.

The editors are to be congratulated for putting together such a valuable volume, which indeed moves the reader on from seeing 'fragments' of culture to the perception of that culture's 'fault lines'.

Çiğdem Balım

Emerita, Indiana University

Some Reactions to Review No 42

Just downloaded my copy. What a collection of wonderful, interesting articles on a great variety of subjects.

I have already browsed through the review which as usual is full of stimulating material not always available elsewhere.

Many thanks for this splendid issue.

I just had a very quick look, and it looks super!

A fabulous edition! And a wonderful set of tributes to Celia.

I am sitting here at this hour reading through the wonderful issue. It is so sad to read about Celia but also an absolute celebration of her amazing life.

it looks marvellous. Both Mina and you have done wonders. Thanks to both of you so much indeed.

RECENT AND FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE

Neumeier, Emily and Anderson, B. (eds.). *Hagia Sophia in the Long Nineteenth Century*. (Edinburgh University Press, 2024). ISBN: 9781474461009.

Wertz, Julie. *Turkey Red*. (I.B. Tauris, 2024). ISBN: 9781350216501.

HISTORY

Fisher, John. *Sacred Space and Anglo-Turkish Relations: The Politics of British Churches and War Graves in Turkey, 1825 to 1976*. (I.B. Tauris, 2024). ISBN: 9780755654611

Fratantuono, Ella. *Governing Migration in the Late Ottoman Empire*. (Edinburgh University Press, 2024). ISBN: 9781399521840.

Güngörürler, Selim. *The Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran, 1639-1682*. (Edinburgh University Press, 2024). ISBN: 9781399510103.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Arslan, C.Ceyhun. *The Ottoman Canon and the Construction of Arabic and Turkish Literatures* (Edinburgh University Press, 2024). ISBN: 97813995025824.

Booth, Marilyn, Savina, C. *Ottoman Translation: Circulating Texts from Bombay to Paris*. (Edinburgh University Press, Paperback, 2024). ISBN: 9781399502580.

Finkel, Andrew. *The Adventure of the Second Wife: The Strange Case of Sherlock Holmes and the Ottoman Sultan*. (Even Keel, 2024). ISBN: 0995756651.

POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

Athanassopoulou, Ekavi. *Turkey's Relations with Israel: The First Sixty Two Years, 1948-2010*. (Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2024). ISBN: 9781138585805.

Emanet, Zühre. *The Politics of Education in Turkey: Islam, Neoliberalism and Gender*. (I.B. Tauris, 2023). ISBN: 9780755636693.

Erol, Mehmet Erman, Altinors G. and Uysal, G. (eds.). *Turkey and the Global Political Economy: Geographies, Regions, and Actors in a Changing World Order*. (I.B. Tauris, 2024). ISBN: 9780755646708.

Kanat, Kılıç Buğra. *Mapping the Fault Lines in Turkey-US Relations: Making the Vulnerable Partnership*. (I.B. Tauris, 2024). ISBN: 9780755650767.

Kasdoğan, Duygu, Kurtiç, E. And Ekinci, M. (eds.). *Material Politics in Turkey: Infrastructure, Science, and Expertise*. (I.B. Tauris, 2024). ISBN: 9780755647880.

Sertdemir, Seçkin. *Civic Death in Contemporary Turkey: Mass Surveillance and the Authoritarian State*. (Cambridge University Press, coming out soon). ISBN: 9781009524599.

Stergiou, Andreas. *Greece, Turkey, NATO and the Cyprus Issue: 1973-1988*. (Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2024). ISBN: 9781032395036.

Uğur-Çınar, Meral. *Memory, Patriarchy and Economy in Turkey: Narratives of Political Power*. (Edinburgh University Press, 2024). ISBN: 9781399514484.

SOCIOLOGY AND RELIGION

Adak, Sevgi. *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in Turkey: State, Society and Gender in the Early Republic*. (I.B. Tauris, 2023). ISBN: 9780755635061.

Akyelken, Nihan. *Women, Work and Mobilities: The Case of Urban and Regional Contexts in Turkey*. (Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2024). ISBN: 9781032562983.

Dedeoğlu, Saniye. *Syrian Refugees and Agriculture in Turkey: Work, Precarity, Survival*. (I.B. Tauris, 2023). ISBN: 9780755634484

Feldman, Walter. *From Rumi to the Whirling Dervishes: Music, Poetry, and Mysticism in the Ottoman Empire*. (Edinburgh University Press, 2024). ISBN: 9781474491860.

Kahn, Michelle Lynn. *Foreign in Two Homelands: Racism, Return Migration, and Turkish-Germany History*. (Cambridge University Press, 2024). ISBN: 9781009486682.

Özkul, Derya and Markussen, H. *The Alevis in Modern Turkey and the Diaspora: Recognition, Mobilisation and Transformation*. (Edinburgh University Press, Paperback, 2024). ISBN: 9781474492034.

Sariaslan, Kübra Zeynep. *Empowering Housewives in Southeast Turkey: Gender, State and Development*. (I.B. Tauris, 2024). ISBN: 9780755646487.

MISCELLANEOUS

Carter, Ben. *Turkey Travel Guide 2024: Exploring the Best of Turkey on Low Budget*. (Independently published, 2023). ISBN: 979-8872345015.

Ergin, Meliz. *Ecocriticism and Turkey*. (I.B. Tauris, 2024). ISBN: 9781350125773.

Compiled by Arın Bayraktaroğlu

In Memoriam



Metin Münir, Journalist

13 Jan 1944 – 23 Sept 2023

by **David Tonge**
Director of IBS Research and Consultancy,
over 30 years' consulting experience for
leading international companies
in Turkey and Central Asia



The 1960s were an age of ideals. Change was going to happen, and we were going to be part of it. Reflecting the truth was the contribution that journalism could make. I stayed the course for about fifteen years. Metin continued it all his life, concerned, penetrating, and committed to the profession he chose on leaving university in Ankara.

He took over my furniture and *BBC* representation when I left the city to go and live in the Colonels' Greece. Initially, he continued at the *Turkish Daily News* but by the

early 1970s he managed a similar handful of strings to that I had in Athens, and managed them better, I always felt, than I did. The fellow students from Ankara's Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi with whom he lodged in a penthouse in Bestekar Sokağı in 1967 remember him as the most canny of them at the poker table, regularly winning whatever money they had, and then spending all that he won on making sure they had enough to eat.

We were all so busy with the daily politics of the time that we never then discussed how he, the son of a forester, had ended up in Ankara with perfect English, stunning erudition in English literature and a passion for music which must have played a part when he married Hikmet, then studying to be an opera singer. It was only after his death that I learnt that his father, Mehmet, was from Lithrankome (Botaşlı), a Karpaz village, spoke English, Armenian, Greek, and Turkish, and read Jean-Jacques Rousseau.²⁸ And that his mother was called Pembe and was the daughter of a successful restaurant-owner in the Nicosia çarşı, working in a bookshop when they fell in love.



Metin's early years were spent in Vroisha (also Frodisia or Yağmuralan) in the Tillyria area on the north-west coast. Years later, Constantinos Lordos, a committed advocate of close relations between the island's Greek and Turkish Cypriots, shared with Metin how the village, uninhabited for over 30 years, had beautiful Damascene rosebushes, walnut trees, almond trees and other fruit trees gone wild. The two decided to visit it together. As Lordos recalled:

“When we got there, Metin literally metamorphosed into a goat! He kept running from place to place, jumping over rocks and fallen trees, uphill, downhill, everywhere. He reconstructed in front of my eyes the whole fallen village, step by step, stone by stone: here was the house of the old man and his daughter who would give me goat milk to drink every morning, here was the stream running serenely down the small, narrow valley, here was the school with the twin fireplaces where I put my foot down to be allowed to go though I was not yet of age!... here was this and that...! Metin could see his minute village as a megacity, from when he was 3-4 years old until he was 7-8 when this lone village fell victim to the local thugs and was evacuated.”²⁹

He was a committed pupil. With no kindergarten in the village, at the age of four he started attending classes with his elder sister, Ülkü, and was devastated when he – probably at school against the regulations – was the only one not rewarded with a school report.

Concerned about the education of their children – by then Ülkü and Metin had two younger brothers, Tekin, later an oculist, and Ziya, who became a poet – his parents bought a house in the city. His father continued to spend much of the year in

²⁸ Communication from Augusta Rieber Münir, who remembers the father's village as being Çayırova (Aghios Theodoros, Ammohostou).

²⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/andreas.lordos/>, 10 October 2023.

Vroisha, being joined by his family during school holidays, but Metin was making his mark at the British High School for Boys. It was in those years that he developed his love for music. There was no gramophone in the house, but the family had a radio and were avid listeners to the British bases' radio station, particularly, Ülkü remembers, Top of the Pops. It was probably at the concerts which were a feature of 1960s Ankara that this interest developed into the passion he would later have for Mozart. "His taste for music was eclectic. Paul Robeson, The Beggar's Opera, good folk and pop, jazz, classical music of any kind, Paul Simon, Simon & Garfunkle, Beatles of course," Augusta Rieber, his second wife, recalls. "Early in our relationship he said that had he not had Mozart he would have lost his mind."

His love for English literature developed in Nicosia. His friend, the historian Philip Mansel, says he knew this literature "better than me, and the Greek and Latin classics. He claimed to have been chased round the bookshelves by a British Council librarian with dishonourable intentions." John Murray Brown of the *Financial Times* remembers him as a genuine bibliophile: "I mentioned I was re-reading Lucky Jim – I was preparing him for a heavy-drinking Irish friend's arrival – and Metin, quick as a flash, quoted chunks of the hangover scene, particularly that bit about Jim's mouth tasting like the bottom of a bird cage."

After finishing secondary school he had considered becoming a diplomat. He went to Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi in Ankara, a traditional training route for Turkish diplomats. How he would have fared in such a career is uncertain. To many of us, he was the least diplomatic friend we had. But his university days in Ankara led him to join a group of Turkish students who went to defend the Erenköy (Kokkina) enclave in northwest Cyprus. This was a lonely beach surrounded by mountains and was a landing point for military supplies for the Turkish Cypriots. General George Grivas, freshly arrived, had stiffened the back of the Greeks who launched an attack on Erenköy on 5 August. About 2,000 members of the Greek Cypriot National Guard and Greek army were resisted by around one-third that number of Turkish Cypriots.

Metin was one of 455 scarcely trained volunteers from Turkey. During the three-day battle – ended after a ceasefire resolution by the UN Security Council – "A close friend was shot beside him, and seeing his Greek neighbours in the crosshairs of his rifle he needed little more convincing of the folly that had led to the conflict. Later, as a journalist, it was his scoop that revealed the existence of the Atilla Line, the de facto boundary imposed by Turkish troops in 1974 that divided Cyprus into north and south."³⁰ He always deflected questions on his military experiences, but his elder sister, Ülkü, remembers him as being away for two years. "We only learnt where he was when we received a letter sent via a Swedish UN peacekeeper whom he had befriended."

Metin returned to Ankara and, after graduation started to work at the *Turkish Daily News*, owned by the ever-hospitable İlhan Çevik and edited by Nick Ludington, who was also the *AP* correspondent. He had great hopes of what Bülent Ecevit could do to broaden the meaning of democracy in Turkey, retaining these after many of us were deeply disappointed at Ecevit's failures in this. By contrast, I remember one

³⁰ Andrew Finkel, *Cornucopia*, 27 September 2023.

article which he sent to the *Financial Times* which started: “Süleyman Demirel, the worst Prime Minister Turkey has ever had,...” We worked together in 1977 on a supplement for the *International Herald Tribune* and a year later I stood in for him as stringer of the *Financial Times* when he took a sabbatical. Come the 1980 coup and censorship of the Turkish press and the BBC Turkish Service became one of the most reliable sources on the human rights’ abuses under the generals. At one point Metin testified in favour of Ecevit in a martial law court (as did Sedat Ergin, a life-long friend).

Metin always retained his links with Cyprus and by the early-1980s had met Asıl Nadir, whose Polly Peck was then well on its remarkable rise to become one of Britain’s leading companies. He was on the editorial staff of *Kıbrıs* (long the leading daily in Northern Cyprus) after its launch in July 1989 and then transferred to become editor of *Güneş* in İstanbul. Nadir had bought *Güneş* earlier in 1989 and, in the year or so that Metin headed the paper, he transformed it into a European-style quality broadsheet.

“This was a time when Turkish media was engaged in a brutal circulation war, attracting readers with contests for cars and through coupons redeemable for encyclopedias. *Güneş*’s manifesto promised to compete on the excellence of its news. For the first time in the Turkish press there was a women’s page, an environment page, a youth section, an editor responsible for covering human rights. Metin’s approach was to hire young people who understood finance, literature or law and let them learn journalism rather than employing the same old hacks who would never learn new tricks. He nurtured a new breed of young editors, gave them their opportunity, paid them a proper salary but wished them good luck at the door if they failed. He gave impetus to so many careers – including my own.”³¹

Metin respected figures who had made a success of their lives. In 1982, he shocked the *Financial Times* by suggesting that the paper did a survey featuring Turkish construction companies. Right he was. The companies were already well on their way to putting their mark on their region. He was intrigued by the success of Dinç Bilgin, in 1993 writing *Sabah Olayı – Sabah ve Dinç Bilgin’in Öyküsü* (*The Sabah Event – Sabah and Dinç Bilgin’s Story*).

By this time, he had started the phase of his career for which he is best remembered, as a trenchant columnist, writing with breadth, depth and integrity. He had long worked with the *Sunday Times* and the *Independent* and was part of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists. He covered the İstanbul earthquake of 1999 for the *Financial Times*, “with vivid writing and real anger at the corruption in the building industry and planning authorities,” according to Hugh Carnegie, then foreign news editor at the paper.

In this period, he worked with *Yeni Yüzyıl*, *Sabah*, *Vatan* and *Milliyet*, freely in the early years and then with increasing discomfort as the governments of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan turned their attention to the press. He also wrote a second book, *Ölümden*

³¹ Andrew Finkel, *Cornucopia*, 27 September 2023.

Sonraki Hayatım" (*My Life After Death*), a description of the massive cardiac arrest he suffered in 2002, when the doctors declared him dead. As he subsequently wrote:

"Dying – the transition from being alive to being dead – was an extraordinary thing. I was not there in body, but I was there as a self. I was flying. But not by the effort of wings, bones and muscles, but by my own, like tree seeds crossing the ocean on the current of winds to land and germinate in the land of another continent." with a flight without wings or propelling power. There was a screen or window. Inside, a honeycomb-coloured, swarming luminous mass, ranging from white to yellow and dark brown, was moving from left to right and from east to west at a frightening speed. This speed also had a sound. Inside me "There was no fear or excitement. It was like I was on a familiar beach or forest trail."³²

He and Hikmet had two daughters together, Berna, involved with her husband in textiles, and Ayşe, a hotelier. The parents divorced and in the early 1990s Metin married Augusta, a pianist from Stuttgart. They had met at Salzburg, taken to the music festival by common friends. "He was inseparable from Mozart's piano concerti which he carried around in a double-cassette box. Three months later he came to London on business with Asil Nadir, and attended a solo recital I was giving at St James's Church, Piccadilly. He took me to Fortnum's. We fell in love that day," Augusta recalls. He had bought a large wooden house high up in Kuzguncuk on the Asian shores of the Bosphorus, where they lived with their children, Selim, now a drummer, and Sara, completing a doctorate in psychology at the University of Bath.

Increasing despair with being a journalist in AKP Turkey and the ending of his second marriage saw him spending more time in the farmhouse in Northern Cyprus that he had bought in the 1980s. This was in Özanköy, midway between the Monastery of Bellapais and the sea. "When I land in Cyprus, the smell of the air makes me feel younger," he told Şerif Kaynar. As conditions for journalism worsened, this progressively became his base, with him filling the garden with plants and the house with books.³³ He had an incessant thirst for information to feed his understanding of the world. He kept a post box in southern Cyprus to which he would have books delivered, the last ones being on medical advances in cancer. He continued to write on current issues and nature, including for the internet newspaper *T24* for five years, and for the Cypriot paper *Diyalog*.

He did not cut his links with the country where he had lived for half a century, his last trips being to Karaburun, İzmir, where his friend Nuray had a summerhouse and to Kars. He and Nuray were planning a trip to Berlin to see his son on stage and a reunion with his four children in 2024 when he died from a rupture of the aorta. He was a grumpy, gruff figure, "tyrannical in serving tea not coffee to his guests", according to Kaynar, impatient with many but unreservedly appreciated by his family and many friends, saddened by the degradation of public life he saw happening on his island, and usually taking a bag to collect waste on his many walks.

³² From *Ölümden Sonraki Hayatım*, cited by Hakan Aksay, *T24*, 27 September 2023.

³³ At one point he had a collection of classical sculpture and artefacts, now in a local museum.

He had been exposed to Kemalist values at the Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi, but he was always more Cypriot than Turkish, seeing Cyprus with many of the aspirations which the British had proclaimed for its people. His links with British culture ranged from appreciating its shirt-makers, teas, design and style – Harrods not Marks & Spencer – to following its music and, always, its literature. He kept a book account in London, at Hatchards. “When the Queen died, it was also his Queen,” Ayşe said in 2024. Philip Mansel remembers encouraging him to sing God Save the Queen in Turkish, as he had been taught at school. His own funeral took place close to his farmhouse, attended by a number of former ministers and the General Secretary of the Halkın Partisi, which shared his concerns over corruption. He is buried under a tree overlooking the sea.

It is a striking trajectory, with some hint of his multi-dimensionality evident in the haunting lines he wrote as his farewell contribution to *Milliyet* in November 2012. As my English translation of his poem falls short, here is the Turkish original too³⁴. (DT)

MM: “I wrote the following to be published on Saturday. I would like to present this to you as a farewell letter. Hoping to meet someday somewhere else or in another way...”

Bir ülkede, bir kişi, bir bir saydı

There is a country, there is a person, he counted one by one

Bir duvar var, yıkılmıyor.

There is a wall, it does not fall.

Bir şarkı var, duyulmuyor.

There is a song, it is not heard.

Bir mesaj var, ulaşmıyor.

There is a message, it does not arrive.

Bir dağ var, aşılmıyor.

There is a mountain, it is not scaled.

Bir sevgi var, paylaşılmıyor.

There is a love, it is not shared.

Bir cennet var, gidilmiyor.

There is a heaven, it is not visited.

Bir dua var, edilmiyor.

There is a prayer, it is not said.

Bir rüya var, gerçekleşmiyor.

There is a dream, it does not happen.

Bir giysi var, çıkarılmıyor.

There is a garment, it is not removed.

Bir kılıç var, kınlanmıyor.

There is a sword, it is not sheathed.

Bir yara var, kapanmıyor.

There is a wound, it does not heal



CYPRUS

In the light of this Obituary we would like to mention that we are looking for a contributor who will write a **CYPRUS UPDATE** for our two annual issues. This will continue the coverage of new events in the island which has been provided for many years by Professor Clement Dodd. If you might be able to write this feature for *TAS Review*, please contact one of the Co-Editors.

³⁴ My thanks to Metin’s family for sharing these memories, to those cited, and to Funja Güler.



British Association for Turkish Area Studies

Membership application form

BATAS is an entirely independent and voluntary association whose aims are:

- to promote interest in and knowledge of Turkey and its cultural/geopolitical area, its history, culture, people and current affairs
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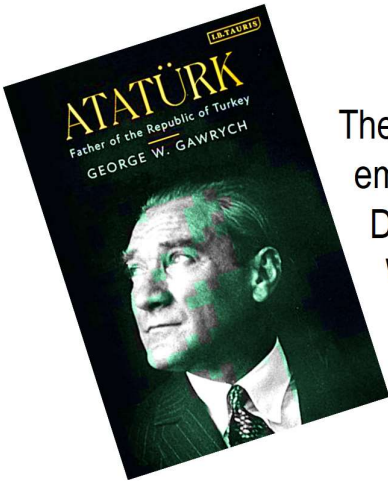
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Request for contributions

TAS *Review* welcomes articles, features, reviews, announcements, and news from private individuals as well as those representing universities and other relevant institutions. Submissions may range from 250 to 2500 words and should be in A4 format and, preferably, sent electronically to the Co-Editors Dr Mina Toksöz at mina@blauel.com and/or Sigrid-B Martin sigimartin3@gmail.com. Submissions for the Spring issue would be particularly welcomed by 1 September 2024 or preferably earlier.



The Centenary of the Republic of Türkiye will be embraced again in our next *BATAS Review* by David Shankland's scholarly review of George W. Gawrych's book entitled 'Atatürk: Father of the Republic of Turkey'.



A note about Kübra Uygur's overview of the Turkologentag 2023, mentioned in the 'Editorial': The TAS Review editorial team is currently working on a special issue, which we plan to publish online by the end of summer 2024, featuring papers from the Turkologentag 2023. This publication will be devoted only to selected papers from the Armeno-Turkish panels from the event.



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