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BATAS

The 2023 John Martin Lecture in collaboration with the LSE

Friday 17 November 2022, 6.00 to 7.30 pm

Professor Şule Kut

Professor of International Relations & Political Science, specialist subject Turkish Foreign Policy & the Balkans.
Previously Rector of Istanbul Okan University and Vice Rector of Istanbul Bilgi University.

Turkish Politics and Foreign Policy: A Centennial Reflection

Alumni Theatre, Cheng Kin Ku Building,
London School of Economics

[Eventbrite link for registration](#)

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BATAS WEBINARS 2024



There will be two webinars.
which are all to be confirmed and announced.



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

Editorial

This *Review* will appear somewhat slimmer (to save on printing and postage) than usual but is still full of informative and captivating articles. The BATAS membership has to be aware that following the death of our beloved chairperson Celia Kerslake and the serious health problems of our treasurer/membership secretary John Moreton plus the effects of Covid the organisation is short of funds -- for which solutions will be discussed at the next AGM. But now you will hear something about the contents of this edition.

The members that were able to attend the symposium in Cambridge will remember the varied and rich contributions by William Hale about the history and changing role of all the Turkish presidents up to the present time; by Bülent Gökay concentrating on the aftermath of the earthquake and its influence on the elections and the economy; by Gemma Masson on the Ottoman relations with Vlad Dracula, son of Vlad II Dracul, Prince of Wallachia and by Martin Stokes on the folk-singer Enver Demirbağ.

Political developments since the eventful May election are covered by Andrew Finkel who treats the reader to his customary superbly comprehensive overview of Turkish politics with eye-opening clarity. A particularly insightful contribution comes from Yücel Güçlü about Selahattin Ülkümen, a wonderful yet almost forgotten hero of WWII. The more light-hearted essay by Tan Margul of the history and remaining role of Istanbul's *meyhanes* with some injection of a drop or two of Rakı concludes the 'History, Culture & Society' section.

The book review and recent new publication section with contributions by Çiğdem Balım, David Shankland, Mina Toksöz and Arın Bayraktaroğlu almost speaks for itself and remains in popular demand. We are also grateful for contributions in memoriam by Suna Çağaptay for Prof Ousterhout and Laurent Mignon regarding the memorial for Celia Kerslake at St Anthony's

The co-editors are indebted to all the contributors and are very grateful to the proof-readers S Parkin, J Sindall, E Casassa and, notably, to Brian Beeley. Any additional help with proof-reading would be very welcome, as, of course, would be continued contributions to this publication. And – to quote from our last edition – we would welcome suggestions of anyone who might be approached for an article or review, because BATAS has to live on....!

Sigrid-B Martin
Co-Editor

Mina Toksöz
Co-Editor

From the BATAS Symposium (May 2023)

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 1

Since the amendment of the constitution in 2017 the position of the president in Turkey's politics has become a major bone of contention. Critics fiercely contest President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's claim that the institution of a powerful presidency is needed to provide stability to the political system, arguing instead that democratic backsliding has brought Turkey close to one-man rule. This article aims to put these crucial issues into historical perspective, outlining the conflicts over the presidential office which stretch right back to the foundation years of the Turkish republic. It closes with an attempt at analysis of the current conflict over the presidency, and prospects for the future.

The parliamentary republic, 1924-2014

Until 2014, when Tayyip Erdoğan was elected president, it was generally accepted that Turkey was a longstanding, if unstable, example of a parliamentary rather than a presidential republic, in which the prime minister and cabinet exercised executive power but held office only so long as they enjoyed the support of the legislature. The president's role was constitutionally limited, and supposedly symbolic. At the outset, however, this principle was not universally accepted. In 1924, the first draft of the original republican constitution proposed the creation of a powerful presidency, in which the president would have been elected by the Grand National Assembly for a seven-year term, and given the power to dissolve the assembly, and veto bills passed by it, with a two-thirds majority needed in the assembly to overturn a presidential veto. However, the deputies refused to grant the head of state such wide powers, and his



term of office was reduced to four years, conterminous with that of the assembly.¹ Between 1924 and 1946 Presidents Atatürk and İnönü ruled Turkey virtually unopposed, but they did so as leaders of the Republican People's Party (CHP) in a single-party state rather than as presidents of the republic. Another milestone was passed in 1950,



when the Democrat Party, led by Adnan Menderes and Celal Bayar, won power in Turkey's first fully competitive elections. Bayar was duly elected president, but in spite

¹ See Suna Kili, *Turkish Constitutional Developments and Assembly Debates of the Constitutions of 1924 and 1961* (Istanbul, Robert College Research Center, 1971) pp.43-53.

of his seniority, he preferred to take a back seat, allowing Menderes, as prime minister to run the government, in accordance with the constitution.

On 27 May 1960 the Menderes government was overthrown by a coup d'état. A military junta, known as the National Unity Committee and led by General Cemal Gürsel, ruled Turkey until November 1961. This oversaw the enactment of a new constitution, which was first debated by a Constituent Assembly, handpicked by the junta. Proposals for a more powerful presidency, in which the president would be directly elected by the voters for a seven-year term, were rejected in favour of a retention of the previous system, with the addition that the president should be officially non-partisan, being required to resign from any party of which he might previously have been a member.² He was to serve for a single seven-year term, being elected by the assembly from among its members by a two-thirds majority, followed by an absolute majority if no candidate could be elected in the first two rounds of voting.

Elected civilian government was restored in November 1961. Between then and 1989 the office of president was effectively used by the Turkish military as a central part of a disengagement or 'hands-off' formula, by which they sought to continue a role in government without the need for direct military rule. Accordingly, Cemal Gürsel served as president until his death in 1966, when he was succeeded by the former Chief of the General Staff, ex-General Cevdet Sunay.³ On 12 March 1971 the General Staff interrupted the 'hands off' formula by issuing a 'memorandum'; forcing Prime Minister and Justice Party leader Süleyman Demirel to resign. From then until October 1973 the country was ruled by a series of nominally civilian governments, following the off-stage directions of the military chiefs. In March 1973, when Sunay's term of office ended, General Faruk Gürler, his successor as Chief of the General Staff, assumed that he would follow him as president. However, his candidacy was opposed by a several of the top commanders, as well as Demirel and the new leader of the CHP, Bülent Ecevit. Since the president had to be elected by the assembly, the opposition of both the main party leaders effectively blocked Gürler's path. After an alternative proposal to alter the constitution to allow Sunay to serve a second term failed to pass by a single vote, the party leaders finally agreed on the candidature of ex-Admiral Fahri Korutürk, who was duly elected in April 1973. Although not the first choice of the Generals, as a former armed services commander Korutürk was able to continue the disengagement formula, but with the important proviso that the General Staff could not now assume that its own nominee would automatically become president.⁴

Following general elections in October 1973, civilian government was restored, but with no party able to win a reliable majority in parliament, Turkish politics was wracked with intense instability, ending in economic collapse and a wave of terrorist attacks by gun-slinging extremists of both left and right. In Ankara, parliament was deadlocked. When Korutürk's term of office expired in April 1980, the deputies failed to elect a successor, in no less than 115 rounds of voting. This obliged the Speaker of the Senate, İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil, to step in as acting president. Finally, at 2.00 a.m.

² Ibid, pp.123, 128. 'He' may be read as 'he/she' (Turkish does not make gender distinctions).

³ To qualify for election, members of the armed forces were required first to resign their commissions, and then become members of the Grand National Assembly. To achieve this they could be nominated as members of the 'President's Contingent' in the Senate, which was established as an upper house of the Turkish parliament between 1961 and 1980.

⁴ The writer has explored these events in greater detail in *Turkish Politics and the Military* (London, Routledge, 1994, repr. 2006) pp.203-11, on which this account is based.

on 12 September 1980 the long-awaited axe fell as the tanks began to roll and the army returned to power in another swift coup.⁵

Led by General Kenan Evren, Chief of the General Staff, as Head of State (*Devlet Başkanı*), Turkey's second outright military regime stayed in power until December 1983. The Generals oversaw the passage of a new constitution (Turkey's third since 1924) which was passed by a national referendum of dubious democratic legitimacy in November 1982. With the enactment of the constitution, Kenan Evren was automatically declared elected president unopposed. The constitutional text increased some of the president's powers, but left government in the hands of the prime minister, effectively continuing the 'hands-off' formula. To avoid a repeat of the parliamentary impasse of 1980, the rules for the election of the president by the assembly were altered, so that if no candidate received an absolute majority in the third round of voting, the two front-runners would compete in a run-off in a fourth round. On assuming office, the president was also required to take an oath promising, among other things, to 'perform without bias the functions that I have assumed.'⁶

With the revised institutions in place, general elections were held on 6 November 1983 in which the pre-1980 parties and their leaders were banned from competing. The results were a serious setback for Evren. In an eve-of-poll broadcast he had unwisely urged the voters to support the newly-established National Democracy Party, led by the lacklustre retired General Turgut Sunalp. In the event, Sunalp was roundly defeated by Turgut Özal, whose Motherland Party (ANAP) effectively inherited the mantle of Menderes and Demirel on the centre-right of Turkish politics. This result symbolised a significant weakening of the president's position, and the start of the shift away from the formula established in 1961. When Evren's term of office ended in November 1989, Özal used his majority in parliament to have himself elected president – the first fully civilian candidate to hold the office since Celal Bayar, back in the 1950s. Demirel, who had returned to politics in 1987 as the leader of the True Path Party (DYP) won a majority in general elections held in 1991, and when Özal died suddenly of a heart attack in April 1993, he won election as president. In the presidential office, both Özal and Demirel favoured the idea of a switch to a presidential system, but neither of them had sufficient support in parliament to effect this momentous constitutional change.⁷

When Demirel's term as president ran out in May 2000 the assembly elected Ahmet Necdet Sezer as his successor. The new president had previously been Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court, Turkey's most politically important judicial post. The beginning of his term coincided with the start of a severe economic crisis which saw the collapse of the old politicians, and the emergence of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) as Turkey's rising political star, winning an overall majority in the November 2002 elections. Sezer had no explicit party allegiance but was a stern supporter of Kemalist secularism. This brought him into conflict open conflict with the AKP, with its Islamist roots. The issue came to a head in April 2007, as Sezer's term

⁵ For the background, see Mehmet Ali Birand, tr. Mehmet Dikerdem, *The Generals' Coup in Turkey: an Inside Story of 12 September 1980* (London, Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1987).

⁶ 1982 Constitution, Articles 102, 103. For the full text, see www.icnl.org/wp-content/uploads.

⁷ Şule Özsoy Boyunsuz, 'The AKP's proposal for a "Turkish type of presidentialism" in comparative perspective', *Turkish Studies*, Vol.17, No.1, p.68; citing Üstün Ergüder, 'Başkanlık mı, Parlamenter Sistem mi?', in Cem Aktaş, ed., *Kritik Kavşak: Parlamenter Sistem-Başkanlık Sistemi* (Istanbul, Koç Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2015) p.128.

drew to a close, and the AKP nominated Abdullah Gül – a co-founder of the AKP, along with Tayyip Erdoğan – as its candidate. Since the AKP had a comfortable majority in the assembly, it could easily have elected Gül, but the CHP claimed, on highly dubious grounds, that a quorum of two thirds of the total membership of the assembly would be required. By boycotting the ballot, the CHP planned to block Gül's election, and carried its case to the Constitutional Court.⁸ On 27 April, just prior to the Court's pronouncement of its verdict, the website of the office of the Chief of the General Staff issued what became known as the 'e-memorandum', emphasising the armed forces commitment to secularism – by implication, opposing Gül's election. On 1 May, in a highly controversial ruling, the Court upheld the CHP's claim. This deadlock required the dissolution of the assembly, and new elections.⁹

Prior to the elections, the AKP tabled an amendment to Article 101 of the constitution, under which future presidents would be elected directly by the voters for a five-year term, renewable once. President Sezer referred this proposal to the Constitutional Court, which accepted its constitutionality on 5 July 2007 – abruptly reversing its previous stance. In the parliamentary elections, held on 22 July, the AKP retained a comfortable majority of 341 of the 550 assembly seats. With the help of the right-wing Nationalist Action Party (MHP), Abdullah Gül won election on 28 August. Having passed through parliament, the constitutional amendments were accepted by a majority of just under 69 percent in the following referendum, held on 21 October 2007.¹⁰

To be continued in Review No 43

A Hero by Any Other Name

by **Gemma Masson**

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The prevalence of history in popular culture is something that has permeated human society as long as popular media has existed. However, studies by historians upon this phenomenon are sadly rare, the most notable exception being Jerome De Groot.¹¹ Studies of the representation of history in popular culture is more likely to be seen from scholars of literature or film and media studies. Sadly, the participation of historians in these types of study are scarce and there is definitely space for them in the discourse.

⁸ Ergun Özbudun gives a full account of these subsequent events in William Hale and Ergun Özbudun, *Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey: The Case of the AKP* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2010) pp.39-40.

⁹ Under Article 102 of the 1982 constitution – ironically, sponsored by the military regime of 1980-83.

¹⁰ Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, 'Turkish Popular Presidential Elections: Deepening Legitimacy Issues and Looming Regime Change', *South European Society and Politics*, Vol.20. No.2, pp.159-60; Hale and Özbudun, *op.cit.*, pp.40-41.

¹¹ Jerome De Groot, *The Historical Novel* (2009), *Consuming History* (2008) & *Remaking History* (2016)

Jerome De Groot, a literary scholar has written extensively on this topic and has even issued an open invitation to historians to take up the study of popular culture as part of their discipline. In his book *Remaking History* De Groot states that “There is a presumed binary relationship between history and fiction (with ‘fiction’ invariable being the lesser partner).”¹² He goes on to discuss how objectivity, or lack thereof, can affect the representation of history in popular culture. This is true as it is possible to see the same historiographical narratives of bias in popular culture as in academic historiography.

However, thinking about stories, while teleology is a practice to be avoided in the historians’ work, it cannot be denied that certain narratological patterns do repeat themselves. Booker also refers to something he calls the meta-plot, which I personally view as synonymous with the monomyth of Joseph Campbell and it is Campbell's framework I intend to utilise here. Campbell is known to mythologists and folklorists as being the scholar who outlined ‘The Hero's Journey’, the three larger stages each containing 5-6 smaller events. Now, it is important to note that Campbell does not claim that all hero’s journey go through all of these steps and not always in the same order but the basic framework is pretty solid. Campbell characterises the Hero as someone very invested in their immediate surroundings, less about the transcendent ideals, and that a Hero lives a life of self-discovery, rather than being defined by a single courageous act.

The three stages of the Hero's Journey are Departure, (containing Call to Adventure, Refusal of the Call, Supernatural Aid, Crossing the First Threshold & The Belly of the Whale), Initiation (The Road of Trials, Meeting with the Goddess, Woman as Temptress, Atonement with the Father, Apotheosis and Ultimate Boon) and Return (Refusal of the Return, The Magic Flight, Rescue from Without, Crossing of the Return Threshold, Master of Two Worlds and The Freedom to Live).¹³

Fiction is designed to create an emotional response and so the biased characterisations of the players may be more understandable in popular culture, however this compounds the issue of trying to create a believable and possibly semi-accurate representation of historical characters and events while giving that emotional currency to the consumer and entertaining them. With this in mind then, is another function of popular culture to create heroes? And moreover, how and why are heroes created out of historical figures? The question of objectivity raised by De Groot also connects to the use of popular culture as a medium for representing and propagating political opinions.

Mehmed II, aka as Al Fatih (The Conqueror), is known for reigning twice in his lifetime. Born in 1432 he was sent at age 11 to Amasya under the care of tutors to learn how to rule and administrate among other princely arts. At age 12 he undertook his first rule as Sultan between 1444-1446. His father Murad II wished to retire and meditate on mountaintops with Sufis. However in 1446 Murad found himself once again upon the Ottoman throne. There are mixed theories about Murad’s return with some arguing the viziers panicked and recalled him as a group while others claim it was caused by a janissary revolt engineered by Candarlı Halil Paşa. Whatever the reason Murad retained the throne until his death in 1451 which saw Mehmed again as Sultan of the

12 De Groot, Jerome, *Remaking History: The Past In Contemporary Fiction*, (Routledge: London, 2016) p. 3

13 Campbell, Joseph, *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*, (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 2004) pp. 1-121

Ottoman Empire. The 19-year-old sultan at once put his energies into military matters, strengthening the Ottoman navy and preparing for his now famous conquest of Constantinople. This is where I will leave Mehmed as the rest of his life has very little bearing upon his relationship with Vlad III.

Here was another ruler with an on-again-off-again relationship with his throne. Vlad would reign three times before his death in 1476. Born sometime between 1428-1431 Vlad Dracula was the second legitimate son of Vlad II Dracul, Prince of Wallachia who had gained the name Dracul, meaning dragon, for his membership in the chivalric Order of the Dragon. This was a Christian knightly order founded by Sigismund of Hungary and modelled on the Crusader military orders requiring members to fight for the Christian faith against all enemies of the cross. In this case, the Order viewed the Ottomans as their



prime rivals at this time.^{11?} The young Vlad, named after his father, bore the name Dracula meaning son of the dragon, for this reason. In 1442 Vlad and his younger brother Radu were taken as hostages by Murad II as insurance that their father would not move against the Ottomans. This brought the boys into the Ottoman court, and they received a noble Ottoman education alongside the young prince Mehmed. The boys became fluent in Ottoman Turkish as well as studying Arabic, the Quran, history and philosophy as well as more practical arts such as horsemanship and warfare. The brothers were very different, with the young Radu completely assimilating into Ottoman culture, converting to Islam and gaining the sobriquet 'cel Frumos' meaning 'the beautiful' or 'the handsome'. He became a close companion and favourite of Mehmed. Vlad retained his loyalty to the Order of the Dragon and used his time at the Ottoman court to learn as much as he could about Ottoman culture and resources in order to better understand his enemy. In this time, he presented himself as a loyal vassal and so in 1447, upon the death of his father and older brother, Murad sent him to Wallachia with an Ottoman army to claim the throne for the Ottoman Empire, with the understanding that Vlad would serve as a vassal and pay tribute to the Sultan. Needless to say, this is not how events played out. Vlad turned upon the Ottomans and began mustering his resources to fight against them, a crusade he would continue to his death. This was an action which was not well received by his contemporaries, and not only the Ottomans. It should be mentioned here that due to the apocryphal nature of many of the accounts relating to Vlad's life and times we must be critical of everything we hear. This is due to the issue of the survival of sources and later additions which would be purely for propaganda purposes, having little to no factual value.

What I intend to do now is to map the hero's journey onto Vlad: 'The Last Confession' by C C Humphreys, a novel which portrays Vlad and Mehmed and see how it fits.

The book uses the framing device of a confession given by Dracula's personal priest, his mistress and his longtime companion in arms. The latter, a character called Ion is the one who most addresses the relationship between Vlad and Mehmed in his recountings, having been with Vlad at the Ottoman court as a young political hostage. The image this novel portrays of the relationship is openly hostile. The boys first encounter each other in the narrative when Mehmed makes a grand entrance on horseback, he notices Vlad and his companions and attempts to provoke them.

"Dracula," he exclaimed, returning the stare. "Two Draculas. Two sons of the Devil...and their little gang of imps." He glanced around at the others dismissing them,

his gaze returning to Vlad. 'I am glad your father still behaves like a sheep, so his lambs can live.'

'And your father rules again, Mehmet,' replied Vlad evenly, 'to universal rejoicing.'¹⁴

The exchange continues in a similar vein for a while. Humphrey's Mehmed is humiliated by the loss of his throne and seeks to bolster himself by sneering at the royal hostages. This rivalry extends to a challenge at the game of *jereed* which Vlad wins and further humiliates Mehmed. Vlad goes on to rescue and liberate one of Mehmed's concubines which further infuriates the young prince. The action in this part of the novel culminates in Mehmed losing his temper and branding Ion with his *tuğra*. If we model this first interaction and its context into the first part of the hero's journey Vlad's call to adventure can be seen in his very presence in the Ottoman court, albeit his having very little choice about it occurring, but he can choose how he approaches it. He is studious and is very much there to learn about the Ottomans, the better to defeat them in the future. Know thine enemy. He refuses the call (to conflict?) when he refuses to be provoked by Mehmed and, possibly by supernatural aid or natural skill, crosses the first threshold of beating the Ottoman prince at a sporting game. Having enraged Mehmed Vlad is arguably in the belly of the whale, already a hostile environment he makes it harder on himself by refusing to be submissive and rising to every challenge, arguably on his Road of Trials. He meets the goddess in the form of a concubine belonging to Mehmed, a concubine being a natural Temptress, and Vlad frees her further angering the Ottoman Prince. This concubine is the girl who later becomes the same mistress that is being interviewed in the framing plot. Vlad's Atonement with the Father comes, not with his literal father but in dreams and visions he experiences when imprisoned in the torture school of Tokat. He sees his father asking for his own forgiveness and also has visions of God which console him in his troubles. Being pushed to his extreme under the actions he witnesses and participates in at Tokat Vlad reaches his apotheosis before the Ultimate Book of viewing his first impalement, during that event something in him changes, arguably breaks and he has a revelation. The fact that this happens right before Vlad has intercourse with his older Ottoman school tutor has some symbolism which I am not going to unpack. When he is brought back before Sultan Murad he is informed of the death of his father and older brother and told that he is now the ruler of Wallachia, under the auspices of the Sultan, and is given an army to claim his place. Of course, Vlad being Vlad, refuses to remain loyal to the Sultan, his Refusal to Return to the Ottoman confidence and his Magic Flight, being the survival and exile of Vlad at the end of his first short rule. Rescue from without is when he is brought out of exile by Hungarian King Hunyadi, married to the King's daughter and set to war with men and resources against the Turks again. In returning to the familiar, war with the Ottomans and close proximity to them he crosses the return threshold. Throughout his second longer rule Vlad is Master, not only of Two Worlds but of all he meets. This section of the book features several anecdotes from the life of the historical Vlad, the impaling, punishment of his own noblemen and the nailing of turbans onto the heads of Turkish envoys. Finally, (spoiler alert!) Vlad fakes his own death choosing a Freedom to Live. So much for Vlad being the hero in the hero's journey of this novel. Told mostly following him, we get very little here to compare Mehmed to the THJ model apart from some childhood rivalry and hostile, sniping encounters. What we can extrapolate, from how the events of the novel unfold and impact Vlad as the tale goes on is that we can tell what Mehmed was doing

14 Humphreys, C. C., *Vlad: The Last Confession*, (Orion Publishing Group: Illinois, 2011) p. 55.

even off screen as it were. To take this novel at its face value we would see Vlad as a Hero and Mehmed as a villain although the historical truth is rarely that simple. The heroic representations of these characters, at least in novels, tends to rest heavily on the military and leadership prowess of the men, making them boys own adventure versions of history. They are both, at the same time, young men learning their place in the world, equally capable of being rash and impetuous. This, more nuanced characterisation is in alignment with the postmodernist tendencies in literature, referred to earlier, which facilitates more diverse and multifaceted personalities in literary characters.

How does this link back to our earlier discussions of heroes and history in popular culture? If we take Hook's three explanations for why we create heroes out of historical characters, I would argue that the creation of Vlad and Mehmed in historical memory is a combination of these three factors. Seeing Mehmed as a father figure is obvious, considering his taking of Constantinople and the opening of a new chapter in Ottoman history by doing so. With the city straddling both Asia and Europe the case could be made for Mehmed as the father of the international and multicultural Turkish culture. Vlad as a father figure and hero is something that can be seen with Vlad's passion for keeping his lands free of outside influence, since the 1989 revolution the patriotism for Romania as a country of its own is strong in the national feeling. The question of a population vicariously sharing the glory of their heroes' achievements is one that can be evidenced by popular culture and heritage tourism. Something as simple as taking pride in a certain historical figure being of your nation. This is also presented in education and how historical figures are written about in textbooks and spoken about in lectures. For example, many works seeking to present Vlad as a monster focus on his crime and punishment policies and war conduct while ignoring what may be considered more boring or everyday questions like his economic policy. Using these figures to escape responsibility for heinous actions is a more unpleasant topic, and very often actions and words can be attributed to historical figures that we cannot definitively prove. The draconian (no pun intended) practices of Vlad became celebrated in Ceausescu's Romania and were used to justify that totalitarian regime. Ceausescu really pushed Vlad as a hero and aspirational figure throughout his reign.

To conclude I shall offer some thoughts upon the question of history in popular culture and the role of historians in this. In my opinion the biggest issue preventing history in popular culture from becoming more widely studied by historians, is that of accuracy. It cannot be expected to hold a novelist or a film maker accountable to the same level of historical accuracy as an academic historian. However, with historians becoming more involved with history in popular culture not only will these representations of history find a more equal balance of accuracy and entertainment but will also assist historians in their profession. By more thoroughly understanding how wider audiences are encountering history, historical practitioners can more effectively carry out their role of communicating and educating. Not every novelist or film maker will be able to afford the time and the money to employ historical consultants which creates more problems regarding accuracy. There are also sometimes issues concerning the language skills needed to access many research sources as well as restrictions on access to some archives and libraries. Furthermore, any creator researching themselves can only be as accurate and objective as their research material. As long as there are still various biases and prejudices in the writing of non-fiction and academic history these interpretations will find their way into popular culture, which is another compelling reason for scholarship to strive to be objective. With all of these

obstacles it may be asked whether or not history has any value in popular culture. It is my belief that it has both incredible value and boundless potential. Firstly, there is the educational value of popular culture, while the facts might not all be presented in the most accurate manner very often a television drama or movie is the catalyst which sparks an interest in history on the part of the consumer. Secondly, consumerism. History is a consumer commodity, not only through popular history and culture but also through the heritage and tourism industries. Finally, we must consider the function of popular culture, not only as propaganda but as escapism. A consumer seeks to immerse themselves in the lives and stories of other people by reading a novel or watching a movie, and the emotive characterisations help them to do that. However, in addition if the story being told can be linked to a person, place, event or time which the consumer knows did happen at some time in history, this legitimises and enhances the experience of the consumer. With all of these points in mind it can only benefit historians to move forward by accepting the invitation of Jerome De Groot and engaging with the study of history in popular culture on an interdisciplinary level.



Anatolian Hydropoetics: On Enver Demirbağ's Voice

by Martin Stokes
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If you are from Elazığ, Harput or Palu, you are likely to know of the vocalist Enver Demirbağ (1935-2010). He was one of the last masters of 'Harput music' – a vocal and poetic tradition from the region we might locate in the 'divan belt' in Southeast Anatolia (including Gaziantep, Urfa, Adıyaman, Mardin and Diyarbakır). Falling between urban art traditions and rural folk traditions, these 'divan-s' have been marginalized and largely forgotten in the music culture of the new Republic. It was Mustafa Keser (originally from Maden, Elazığ) who recommended I went to Harput in the mid-1980s, when I was researching Arabesk, and some years before he had become a household name in Turkey. There, he assured me, all my questions would be answered. It took me 35 years to follow up on that excellent piece of advice. My research, when I eventually got there, was interrupted by the Covid pandemic. But it continues when I can find the time, and my appreciation of it continually deepens.

It provides me with an opportunity, too, to pursue a question that has interested me for a long time concerning the relationship between voice and landscape. It takes shape here around a set of rather more specific questions, concerning the production of electricity. Enver's is a voice shaped, locally, by the production of electricity, and by electric means of production. The regional landscape has been shaped by a dam, the

Keban Dam, intended to contribute decisively to Turkey's energy self-sufficiency. I am interested in what each might have to say about the other.

In the opinion of many locally the dam has been an economic, political and ecological catastrophe. If so, it could be regarded simply as an extension of forms of violence exercised over this landscape over much larger periods of history by – according to one's perspective – angry gods, the state, or geology and climate. It is a landscape, consequently, filled with ruins. Or, a landscape of 'ruination', to use anthropologist Anne Stoller's term. And it is an exceedingly complex one, as a brief description of four of the cities (Elazığ, Harput, Palu and Keban) that concern me in this short essay will indicate.

Elazığ itself is the modern administrative capital. Buildings one can identify from aerial photographs in 1925 (Ottoman administrative buildings, the American Protestant Church, the Fabrikatorian silk factory) are now engulfed in, or have disappeared beneath, a grid of drab and featureless apartment blocks¹⁵ (see Kezer 2020). Harput, on the mountain crag above it, was a large and bustling city at the turn of the twentieth century, with its Urartu citadel, its Artukid mosques, its churches, medrese-s and missionary schools. Now it is almost deserted. A handful of mosques, shrines and a few old buildings remain as heritage sites. Palu, 80 km to the east, was punished by the new republic for its support of the Shaikh Said uprising by being deprived of its administrative hinterlands. It went into decline, and a major fire in 1948 spelled the end of the old city. Today it is bare mountainside, dotted with ruins. The most prominent of these is the Armenian church, the only one still to have a roof. Keban, 40 km to the west, was once sizeable, as the Yusuf Ziya Paşa mosque complex and the large Armenian church in the town centre indicate. It grew during the construction of the dam, but then, like many towns here, slowly lost its population to migration.



Enver Demirbağ was raised as an orphan in Ali Bey's mansion in Sakrat (near Palu), with his brother, Paşa. This aristocratic household was soon to go into decline, however. The brothers moved to Elazığ, where they plied their trade in the economic bubble created by the dam construction. The Harput music tradition was then being reinvigorated by a lively and entrepreneurial folklorist, Fikret Memişoğlu. Its older configurations – vocalists and poets from the *medrese*-trained administrative classes, instrumentalists from the Christian communities, particularly Armenian – had unravelled following the Armenian migrations to America, and then the genocide. But the energy Memişoğlu injected could not halt the tide of changing musical tastes and fashions. Despite efforts, the brothers failed to find a national audience. Enver became reclusive, and died in a house fire, after accidentally tipping over a stove. His voice itself, then, has the quality of a 'ruin', of something broken, and largely forgotten, by time.

One can speculate, theoretically and poetically, about how these two 'ruin-scapes' (voice and landscape) might come together. But one can also, and more simply, observe how they come together in the local imagination. A YouTube video dating

¹⁵Kezer, Zeynep 2020. "The Projections of a Roof: An Ottoman Armenian Family Residence in Nineteenth-Century Eastern Turkey". *Platform*, 23 November (accessed 19 March 2023). 2020. <https://www.platformspace.net/home/the-projections-of-a-roof-an-ottoman-armenian-family-residence-in-nineteenth-century-eastern-turkey>

from around 2010 provides an excellent opportunity to do so¹⁶. It is the work of one Muhammed Temur, who I have not yet been able to locate. There does not, at first sight, appear to be much to look at or think about. Typical of the period, the images are not synchronized to the music; they have a garish, kitsch quality and no narrative logic. I would describe them as a kind of ‘acousmatic dreamwork’ – seemingly random, even as they compel (somehow) a search for connections and meanings.

How to make sense of it? We might start, firstly, with what we read. Typical of early YouTube posts, people have written short comments (81 in total), which tell us various things about the affection and respect in which he is held locally, as well as how and where people listen to him. Predictably, one listens in tears, and at night – the poetic cliché of the listener in these traditions. Other, more unusual, scenarios are presented, however. One listener tells us he takes recordings like this to Enver Demirbağ’s grave, in order both to listen and allow Enver himself to hear (“*Geçen gün mezarına gidip bu hoyratı hem dinledim hem ona dinlettim. Mekanın cennet olsun*” ‘Asde Asde’). Music here, as elsewhere, is rarely for living human ears only.

Another helpful viewer (Atahan Emre Özkaya) has added the lyrics, which are indeed hard to discern from a listening: *Yara benden yara benden/Yalvarın yara benden/Sinemde dağ-ı hicran/Sağalmaz yara benden*. This omits a certain amount – the extensive vocal interjections, for instance, and a fifth line (*Divane gönlümün sebebi sensin*), which differs from what one can locate in archival transcriptions. Turhan and Taşbilek, for instance, give us the Fuzuli-esque “*Virane bağlarda baykuşlar öter*”, from vocalist Salih Turhan and Şemsettin Taşbilek¹⁷. The transcription of the lyrics by our helpful viewer does, at least, address a mishearing represented by the YouTube title. It is not *yara bende* (“I am wounded”, as in the title) but *yâra benden* (“[plead] to the lover, on my behalf”). In the fourth line, where the meaning of *yara* returns to ‘the wound’, there is another issue: the rhyme scheme demands the grammatically more elusive ‘*benden*’ (from/beyond/past me), and not the (perhaps expected, as in the title) ‘*bende*’ (in/with me). It is the wound that possesses the agency here, not the poet/singer. An English translation of the lyric would go, then, as follows: “To the lover, to the lover/Plead to the lover from me/In my breast the scar of separation/The unhealable wound. It is beyond me”. The singing adds qualities of semantic ambiguity (*yara/yâra, bende/benden*), layering and interruption. We might regard this as an important, perhaps even the most important, part of the aesthetic – which a literal ‘translation’, seeking to avoid the numerous potential ‘mishearings’, would miss.

Secondly, what do we hear? Despite the banal spoken introductions, and the heavy reverb, we hear some sophisticated vocal work. We hear the voice accompanied by a solo *çümbüş* – the local urban accompaniment instrument, not the rural *saz* - anticipating the modal twists and turns. These are specific to the local modal form ‘*elezber*’. At a general level these modes have more in common with, and indeed are sometimes identical to, those of the Baghdad *maqam*, and the *dastgah* of Iran, and have nothing much to do with the Istanbul Ottoman tradition. Instrumentalist and vocalist in this recording handle *elezber* with evident skill – keeping things high in the register until the very end, where the line descends to an artful cadence, resolving the modal ambiguities. Through all the reverb



¹⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hNgalEt1O10> or search on the words ‘Enver Demirbağ’ and ‘Yara Bende’.

¹⁷ Turhan, Salih and Şemsettin Taşbilek 2009. *Elazığ-Harput Havaları*. Ankara: Elazığ Belediye Kültür Yayınları. 389

we hear, too, a sensitive voice. Enver's voice is still heard by his devotees as a voice that was 'soft' (*yumuşak*), not 'sert' ('hard'), like his assertive and abrasive brother, Paşa.

Thirdly, what do we see? A sequence of ten images or so – a lake (Hazar lake) and folkdancers, old houses, old photos, architectural heritage, the dam, water springing from rocks. Underpinning these is, I would suggest, the idea of a landscape experienced and represented in terms of violent eruptions and inundations (caused by mystical, political or geological agencies), and the ruins (or ruination) they produce. The image of the dam lit by garish flashes of lightening offers the main clue. The picture postcard image of Lake Hazar appears banal until one recalls the folktale associated with it: a woman, lost and asking for water, which is refused; she curses the villagers, falls asleep exhausted, and wakes to find herself on an island, the village and all in it drowned by the lake that now surround her. This is one of many local stories of terrifying inundations by angry gods, which, arguably, go back to the time of the Epic of Gilgamesh. And which resurface, in technopolitical terms in the later twentieth century, with the construction of the Keban dam.

The YouTube video suggest an approach to the relationships we might trace between water, power, sovereignty, landscape and voice which we might label 'hydropoetic'. The ghost of Carl Wittfogel's hydraulic hypothesis (explaining the links between water management and cultures of political authoritarianism) hovers over this label, a hypothesis much critiqued, but not so easy to banish. My own label, by contrast, maintains the possibility of a less deterministic framework for understanding these relationships through the lens of sung poetry.

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History, Society & Culture



Selahattin Ülkümen:

The Turkish righteous among the Nations

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by Yücel Güçlü

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Selahattin Ülkümen, a hitherto inconspicuous cog in the wheels of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, suddenly had the spotlight of publicity focused upon him on June 26, 1990, in ceremonies at Yad Vashem (The Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem) as the result of his courage and

resourcefulness in saving the lives of forty-two Jews in July 1944 on the island of Rhodes in the Aegean Sea.

Selahattin Ülkümen and Jews of Rhodes in 1943-1944

In 1912, Rhodes came under Italian administration, with a substantial number of soldiers stationed there. Later, during the first years of the Second World War, Italy – a German ally – shared control of Rhodes with the Nazi government. On this island, far from war-torn Europe, life went on peacefully. In September 1943, soon after Benito Mussolini was removed from power and Italy signed an armistice with the Allies, the Germans occupied Rhodes and thus sealed the fate of the Jewish community on the island.¹⁸ By 1944 the Germans registered the Jews and ordered them to report to the authorities once a month. When the roundups started Ülkümen, the Turkish Consul, was deeply distressed. Haunted by what he knew about German actions in Europe, and worried about the fate of the Turkish Jews on the island, he decided to protect those that he could.¹⁹

When, in 1989, Mathilde Turiel learned that her rescuer, the former Turkish diplomat Selahattin Ülkümen, was living in retirement in İstanbul, she informed Yad Vashem of her rescue story. Born in Turkey, Turiel moved in 1933 to Rhodes when she married a man holding an Italian citizenship. The two sons born to them held dual Turkish-Italian citizenship. After the capture of the island by Italy in 1912, many of the several thousand Jewish inhabitants opted for Italian citizenship and allowed their Turkish ones to lapse. By the time the Germans took over control in September 1943, the Jewish community had dwindled through emigration to some 1,800 persons – almost all of them Italian nationals.²⁰



Life went on peacefully even after the war began. In Mathilde Turiel's words, "the Jews of Rhodes were unaware of what was happening to the Jewish people of the rest of Europe and did not know what was going to happen to them. We had no news because all communications were cut off; radios had been confiscated." But this tranquil situation changed after the German occupation.

At the time, Selahattin Ülkümen, the Turkish Consul on the island, represented Turkish interests, which included looking after Turkish nationals. Suddenly on July 18, 1944, with German forces in full retreat on all fronts, the Nazis decided not to forego the opportunity to liquidate the small Jewish community on the island. On that day, the Gestapo ordered all Jewish males over the age of 16 to present themselves the following day at the German headquarters with their identity cards and work permits. This was presented as necessary for "temporary transportation to a small island nearby" but, in reality, it was to send them to the gas chambers at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

¹⁸ Rachel Bartnick, "Two Turkish Diplomats Who Saved Jews During World War II: Selahattin Ülkümen and Necdet Kent," in David Altabé, Erhan Atay, Israel Katz, eds., *Studies on Turkish-Jewish History: Political and Social Relations, Literature and Linguistics* (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, Inc., 1996), p.xx.

¹⁹ "Man Saved by Turkish Diplomat during War Meets His Rescuer's Son," Jewish Telegraphic Agency, November 1, 2004.

²⁰ Yad Vashem Archives, Jerusalem (henceforth referred to as YVA), Testimony of Mathilde Turiel Regarding the Activities of Selahattin Ülkümen in Rhodes during 1944. Files of the Department for the Righteous Among the Nations, Record Group: M 31, File Number: 4128, Original File Number: 4593.

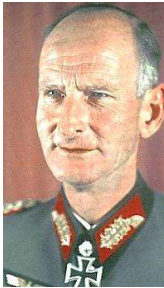
The women were in turn also ordered to show up, with the threat that if they failed to do so, their husbands and fathers would be shot. “As I was about to give myself up,” Mathilde Turiel related, “I was met by Mr Ülkümen at the door [of the assembly point]. This was the first time I had ever seen him. He told me who he was and that I should not enter. He instructed me to wait a few blocks away while he went in to attempt to release my husband and save us from imprisonment,” on the strength of her Turkish origin, and her two sons’ Turkish citizenship.²¹

Mathilde Turiel’s husband later related to her how, inside German headquarters, he overheard Selahattin Ülkümen persuade the Germans to release all the Turkish citizens and their families. He added twenty-five to thirty names to his list in addition to the fifteen certified Turkish nationals. These others had allowed their Turkish citizenship to lapse. The Gestapo officers had at first objected, then bowed to Ülkümen’s demand and allowed forty-two Jews on his list (including Turiel’s family) to leave and to go to the Turkish Consulate in order to obtain the documents that would confirm their Turkish nationality. However, since such documents could not be provided by everyone, Ülkümen argued before the Germans that under Turkish law spouses of Turkish citizens were also under the jurisdiction of Turkey, irrespective of their own citizenship, and he insisted that all the non-Turkish spouses be set free, therefore.²²

There are also testimonies of others including Giamila Tarica who experienced a similar encounter with the Turkish diplomat. Born into the Mizrahi family in Turkey, she also married in Rhodes a man holding Italian citizenship. Alberto and Renata Amato also owed their life to Selahattin Ülkümen. The Amatos too were Italian, but Alberto’s mother had kept her Turkish passport, and this fact miraculously saved their lives.²³

Diplomatic and Economic Relations Between Turkey and Germany in 1939-1944

Some time earlier Ülkümen had secured the release of thirty-nine Turkish and Greek boatmen who had been condemned to death for taking Italian soldiers to refuge in Turkey following the German occupation. However, this time the German commander



at first refused his request, stating that under Nazi law all Jews were Jews, no matter what nationality, and had to go to the concentration camps. Ülkümen responded by quoting his instructions received from Ankara, the same as those sent to the Consulate General in Paris, that “under Turkish law all citizens were equal. We did not differentiate between citizens who were Jewish, Christian or Muslim.” He pointed out to Lieutenant General Ulrich Werner von Kleemann that Turkey had signed a treaty of friendship and nonaggression with Germany and told him that harming any Turkish citizen would violate this agreement.

Furthermore, he insisted to the German that the Turkish Jews on Rhodes deserved the full protection of Turkey and should not be detained or deported. He also argued for other Jews to be accepted as Turkish citizens if they were married to a spouse with a Turkish passport. He went on to inform von Kleemann that “I would advise my

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ YVA, Testimony of Alberto Amato Regarding the Activities of Selahattin Ülkümen in Rhodes during 1944. Files of the Department for the Righteous Among the Nations, Record Group: M 31, File Number: 4128, Original File Number: 4593.

Government if he did not release the Jewish Turks ... it would cause an international incident. Then he agreed.”²⁴

Jewish Survivors on Rhodes in July 1944 - January 1945

Mathilde Turiel remembered the bravery of Selahattin Ülkümen’s efforts: “Thanks to Mr Ülkümen, my husband was freed! What joy, if you can only realize, what a joy that was! Mr Ülkümen had done something extraordinary – yes, extraordinary! And in addition to the Turkish Jews, he succeeded in saving twenty-nine Italian Jews, whom he passed off as Turks, whom he had in some way transformed into Turks.”²⁵ Sadly, on July 23, the rest of the 1,650 were sent to Auschwitz.²⁶

Even after the deportation was completed Ülkümen did not tire. Though the Germans tried to keep the Turkish Consulate *incommunicado*, he managed to inform the Turkish Consul General İnyetullah Cemal Özkaya in Nazi-held Athens-Piraeus of yet some more Dodecanese deportees who were entitled to Turkish protection. As Albert and Elisa Franco in the Nazi camp at Haidari, north of Athens, were forced onto the Auschwitz-bound train, Özkaya arrived with a list of names which he shouted in all directions, while arguing furiously with the Germans. “We were already being led towards the platform,” writes Elisa Franco-Hassson in her memoir, “where the Germans were stacking people inside the freight cars. Suddenly the name of my brother was shouted: Albert Franco! My brother rushed out of the train, jumped onto the platform where the Turks hurried towards him ... From my wagon they began to shout: His sister is also here, take her with you, too!” But the Germans would hear nothing of it. Albert was released because his wife was a Turkish subject. Elisa, like the rest of the family, was formally Italian. Italy was by now at war with Germany and counted for nothing in the situation, while the Germans went out of their way to accommodate neutral Turkey, which was still vital to their interests.²⁷

Jews remaining on the island under Ülkümen’s protection continued to suffer, however. They had to present themselves each morning at 8 a.m. to the Gestapo and they were held for one or two hours for no reason. They suffered hunger, bad medical care, and continuous British bombings which broke many a spirit and threatened their lives.²⁸

After the deportation of the rest of the Jews to the Greek mainland and from there to the death camps, Selahattin Ülkümen continued to protect and give solace to those whom he had saved, all of whom still had to report daily to the Gestapo and still lived in fear that the Germans would change their mind. According to Mathilde Turiel, the Consul did his best to reassure them, saying, “I am your father, nothing will happen to you as long as I am here.” She continued, “we owe our lives to this man who did so much than he had to in order to save all these people.” “There were no financial

²⁴ Stanford Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust: Turkey’s Role in Rescuing Turkish and European Jewry from Nazi Persecution, 1933-1945* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), p.253.

²⁵ Marek Halter, *Stories of Deliverance: Speaking With Men and Women Who Rescued Jews from the Holocaust* (Chicago: Open Court, 1998), p.186.

²⁶ Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: A History of the Jews of Europe* (Newton, KS: Paw Prints, 2008), p.625; Arnold Reisman, *Shoah, Turkey, the US and UK* (Charleston, SC: BookSurge Publishing, 2009), pp.48-49.

²⁷ Nathan Shachar, *The Lost Worlds of Rhodes: Greeks, Italians, Jews and Turks between Tradition and Modernity* (Brighton and Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2013), pp.233-234.

²⁸ 2005 “Ke Haber?” Newsletter.

arrangements involved, and there was never any mention of remuneration for his deeds. Mr. Ülkümen had a reputation as a scrupulous and extremely honest person.”²⁹

It was certainly the case that Ülkümen could have simply stood by and watched the arbitrary behavior of the Germans and refrain from interceding on the Jews' behalf. That was the easier, less risky, course to take. He was not Jewish. He was Muslim, with a promising diplomatic career and a young wife. But Ülkümen did not choose to stand by.³⁰ The last days of the wartime Turkish Consulate in Rhodes was one of physical hardships, danger and excitement. Ülkümen paid a heavy personal price for his humanitarian efforts.³¹

At the beginning of 1944 the German patience waned and their hostility against Ülkümen deepened, after Berlin claimed that Turkey had reneged on the “gentlemen’s agreement” with Germany and had begun to let the Allies use its ports and bases. The charge was not baseless. President İsmet İnönü had adapted his policies to the final outcome of the war he had never doubted. Several times German airplanes simulated dive bomber attacks against the Turkish Consulate in the center of the town. On February 18, 1944, at 2 p.m. two German airplanes bombed at low altitude the Turkish Consulate – possibly the only intentional German air attack during the whole war against a German-controlled target. “It never entered my mind that they would try to kill me. We were used to the antics of their pilots, and we never suspected that they would go beyond harassment. You may say I was young and naive as to what Nazis were capable of. But there really are few comparable events in diplomatic history. What happened to us was extraordinary,” Ülkümen told Nathan Shachar.³²

The German plan was to blame the British for the assault against the Turkish Consulate. RAF Spitfires strafed Rhodes harbor daily – and nightly, moonlight permitting. The usual scenario was for the air raid sirens to go off and then for German fighters to be sent up to confront the attackers. But this time no alert was sounded and neither fighters nor anti-aircraft fire met the airplanes on their way in. The Turks immediately understood who had bombed them. Two consulate employees were killed instantly. Selahattin Ülkümen’s young wife Mihrinisa was terribly injured. She was taken to the Regina Helena hospital, where the Italian doctors told Ülkümen that her spine was broken and the damage too great for any hope of recovery. Next day German sappers collected the bomb fragments in the garden, to remove the *corpus delicti*. Mrs Ülkümen survived for another one and a half year, in great agony. The sound of a distant airplane sent her into violent fits of tremor and she gradually lost her mind sometime after having given birth to a son.³³

In his memoir, Selahattin Ülkümen shows that the reason of the bombing was the German intention of intimidating Turkey and to keep it out of the war. He explains how

²⁹ YVA, Testimony of Mathilde Turiel Regarding the Activities of Selahattin Ülkümen in Rhodes during 1944. Files of the Department for the Righteous Among the Nations, Record Group: M 31, File Number: 4128, Original File Number: 4593.

³⁰ Claudia Rosett, “The U. N. Need Not Be Heroic, Just Humane,” *The Wall Street Journal*, June 25, 2003, p.17.

³¹ Osman Streater, “The Monsignor and the Minister,” *Cornucopia*, Vol.4 (2001),p.74; “Man Saved by Turkish Diplomat during War Meets His Rescuer’s Son,” Jewish Telegraphic Agency, November 1, 2004.

³² Shachar, *The Lost Worlds of Rhodes*, p.222.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp.222-223; YVA, Communication from Itzhak Kerem to Mordecai Paldiel of July 16, 1989. Files of the Department for the Righteous Among the Nations, Record Group: M 31, File Number: 4128, Original File Number: 4593.

Germans were alarmed by the information they had received through their spy “Cicero” Elyesa Bazna positioned in the British Embassy in Ankara. He reported to his German paymasters on the decisions taken in the Second Cairo Conference of December 4-6, 1943 (attended by Franklin Delano Roosevelt, İsmet İnönü and Sir Winston Spencer Churchill), indicating an Allied plan to invade German-occupied Aegean islands before March 15, 1944 using the war planes stationed in Turkey.³⁴

When, on August 2, 1944, Turkey severed ties with Germany and Ülkümen was taken to Piraeus outside of Athens for internment, the worst fears of the pitiful Jewish remnant in Rhodes seemed to be nearing their realization. They were subjected to almost constant harassment by the Gestapo, which often detained them for long periods of time. They were not deported as planned, however, presumably because of the disorder which spread throughout Germany during the last days of the war. Finally in early January 1945, when the German commander Lieutenant General Ulrich Werner von Kleemann learned that representatives of the International Red Cross were about to visit Rhodes to look into the situation of its population, he ordered the remaining Jews to leave for Turkey. They did so on the following day, in many small, leaky rowing boats, sailing precariously across a stormy sea to the safety at the port of Marmaris, a long miserable journey strangely symbolic of the exodus of the Sephardic Jews from Spain through the Mediterranean to their welcome in Ottoman Turkey following their expulsion by the Inquisition in 1492.³⁵

Selahattin Ülkümen never sought recognition for his bravery during the war. Afterwards he went on with his career and never spoke or wrote about how he had defied the Nazis. Giamila Tarika says: “A few survivors and their families knew about it. Nobody else. All through the years, I corresponded with Ülkümen. He might have been in Oslo and I in the Congo, but we always kept in touch.” When Giamila arrived in Israel in 1980 she began to lobby for Ülkümen at Yashem. Many righteous Europeans had been honored for their courage during the carnage, why not he? It appears that nobody, not even the Holocaust researchers, knew the details. She urged Rhodes friends in Africa and America to send in their accounts of Ülkümen’s activities. Giamila’s own testimony, in Yad Vashem archives, begins:

Only those who have trembled in the presence of the SS are able to fully appreciate the courage of *Signor* Selahattin Ülkümen. To put himself, humanely, in the way of the ferocious beasts - *las belvas ferozes* - and to pull their victims away from their claws was an act of heroism. *Il signor* S. Ülkümen was one of the few who ever experienced that satisfaction.³⁶

When Mathilde Turiel later expressed her family’s profound thanks for what he had done for them, she found Selahattin Ülkümen to be an affable but rather shy and modest man, who’s most satisfying recollection of that period seemed to be that he had simply helped fellow humans. These forty-two people and their families, living in Turkey, the United States, Israel, and even in Rhodes, remembered him with gratitude and were instrumental in getting him honored by Yad Vashem, as a “Righteous Gentile.”

Selahattin Ülkümen never wanted to appear in the spotlight. On a visit to him in İstanbul, Nathan Shachar brought up the subject of his exploits in Rhodes. Being a

³⁴ Selahattin Ülkümen, *Bilinmeyen Yönleriyle Bir Dönemin Dışışleri* (A Period of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with Its Unknown Aspects), (İstanbul: Gözlem Gazetecilik Basın ve Yayın A. Ş., 1993), pp.53-56 and 103.

³⁵ Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust*, p.254.

³⁶ Shachar, *The Lost Worlds of Rhodes*, pp.226-227.

modest man, Ülkümen exclaimed: “I never regarded it in terms of valor. It was my responsibility.” “It was your duty to save Turkish subjects from the Nazis, but you exerted yourself to save anyone you could, and you kept trying to save people even after they had been sent away.” “But it was murder, one is no saint for trying to prevent murder. Most people will. It did not endanger me.” “It did. The Nazis had already tried to kill you. They murdered your wife.” “I had no illusions about the Nazis. But I did not act in a spirit of vengeance, I knew I could cause no harm to those who had ruined my family. I am certain I would have tried my best to help the Jews even if I had not borne any personal grudges against the Nazis.”³⁷

Mentally alert until the end, Selahattin Ülkümen passed away at the age of 92 at a nursing home in İstanbul on June 7, 2003, as a result of cardiac arrest.³⁸ Ülkümen’s death was deeply regretted by all who knew him.

As a neutral power whose friendship was valued by both Germany and Vichy France, Turkey was placed in a unique position where it was able to provide assistance to Jews who were being persecuted throughout Nazi-occupied Europe. Turkey was one of the few neutral countries remaining in Europe able to maintain diplomatic representation in Germany as well as in most of the occupied countries, and its diplomats used their position to intervene on behalf of Turkish Jews residents. The Turkish diplomats did their best to protect Turkish Jews, often at the risk of their own lives, as in the case of Selahattin Ülkümen who accepted his assignment to the hazardous Rhodes post with the full knowledge of the dangers involved. He exercised his powers as Consul creatively but pragmatically, in accordance with conditions in Rhodes and in line with Turkey’s policy. Due to the disruption of communication with Ankara after February 18, 1944, he acted without instructions, although the Ministry of Foreign Affairs approved his individual initiative.

Selahattin Ülkümen was a brave man, both morally and physically. His background and upbringing in a diverse locality served to ingrain within him a deep sense of tolerance. The story of Ülkümen in Rhodes showed how one Turkish diplomat with a well-developed sense of human dignity responded valiantly to one people’s suffering.

Some Reactions to Review No 41

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.

³⁷ Ibid., p.228.

³⁸ “Ödüllü Diplomat Ülkümen Toprağa Verildi” (The Awarded Diplomat Ülkümen Is Laid to Soil), *Hürriyet*, June 9, 2003, p.3; “İsmi İnsanlıkla Anılacak” (His Name Will Be Remembered By Humanity), *Cumhuriyet*, June 10, 2003, p.3; Yusuf Eroğlu, “Türk Schindler’i Toprağa Verildi” (The Turkish Schindler Is Laid to Earth), *Star*, June 10, 2003, p.3.

A Concise History of the Evolution of Istanbul's *Meyhanes*

by **Tan Morgul**

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This article on the history of Istanbul's *meyhanes* – loosely translated into English as taverns – has a particular focus on changes since the beginning of the 19th century. There are two reasons, one practical and the other more substantial, for choosing the 19th century as a turning point. On a pragmatic level, *meyhanes* have been around since the Byzantine times but only brief mention is made of the state of them before the 19th century to provide a context against which the more recent transformation should be interpreted.

The 19th century marks the date when the first comprehensive modernization efforts in the Ottoman Empire were undertaken and as such signifies a drastic change in the way Ottomans and more specifically those residing in Istanbul regard *meyhanes* and consuming alcohol in general.

So, this article examines the evolution of Istanbul's *meyhanes* in four stages: **(1)** the pre-19th century; **(2)** the era of modernization from the 19th century to the early decades of the republic; **(3)** the second half of the 20th century which witnessed the rise of religious conservatism and calamitous urbanization policies; **(4)** post-1980s with a specific focus on the 21st century whereby *meyhanes* reimagined, redefined, reenacted themselves as a response to political, social, and even health-related developments.

Two preliminary marks regarding the very nature of *meyhanes* are in order. First, *meyhanes* do not exist in a social, political, or cultural vacuum but reflect and challenge the socio-political or cultural context they are part of. Second, the word *meyhane* comes from Persian and literally means house of wine: *mey* (wine) + *hane* (house). However, for reasons that I explain shortly, in the last century or so, *meyhane* culture has been identified with the distinctively aromatic and cloudy *raki*.

Regulations, Prohibitions, and Reversals

Situated at the western end of the Silk Road and buzzing with energy thanks to its diversified complexion, harboring a variety of cultures ranging from the Eurasian to the Mediterranean, and being a port city bringing together two continents made Istanbul one of the most alluring 'metropolitan' cities of the world. Such dynamic splendor was bolstered, among other things, by a drinking culture at the heart of which stood the *meyhane*: a masculine space for socializing, where a variety of performances are carried out upon a strong notion of *camaraderie*.

Although *meyhanes* were strictly regulated in the Byzantine Empire (i.e., regarding opening times, where they could be located, or who could run them), by the 14th century, nowhere in Europe was wine consumption as key a component of urban daily as it was in Constantinople (Linardou and Brubaker, 2007). Contrary to what many would have expected, the Ottoman conquest of the city didn't cause many radical changes. For instance, according to historian Reşad Ekrem Koçu (1947), after taking the city, Mehmed the Conqueror "left the districts Balıkpazarı and Tahtakale, two densely populated areas where lower classes hung out in *meyhanes* and *harabathanes* (*meyhanes* that employed women dancers), untouched." And, according to the witty Ottoman explorer Evliya Çelebi, there were around 200 *meyhanes* in Galata alone (the Genoese quarter) at the beginning of the 17th century.

However, the 17th century ushered in a cycle of prohibition and reversal-of-prohibition of *meyhanes*, whereby, in Fernand Braudel's brilliant words, "wine became a stowaway" (quoted in Georgeon 2023). As the Ottoman rulers became more conservative, they associated wine and other alcoholic beverages with resistance to Sunni principles and laws and frowned upon both the establishments that served these drinks and their clientele. So, Muslims were banned from consuming alcohol, *meyhanes* were prohibited altogether, or only non-Muslims were allowed to frequent them, and some sultans even ordered the destruction of ships carrying wine.

Nevertheless, as with everything else Ottoman, things weren't that simple. Despite the frequency with which *meyhanes* were punished, the strict regulations that were put in effect were, as a general rule, first relaxed and then discarded entirely. The reason for this invariable reversal, according to Koçu, was twofold: first (and not unlike the conditions in contemporary Turkey), alcohol tax was a major source of income for the Imperial Treasury and, with the worsening economic conditions in the empire, it became impossible to do away with it. Second, Ottoman rulers (not necessarily Sultans but lower-level imperial figures) were aware that banning *meyhanes* only meant alcohol would be consumed in shady, illegal establishments, which of course, would constitute a major potential threat not only to public health but also public order. And so, until the 19th century, *meyhanes* and their clientele lived as stowaways – watchful, vigilant, but not willing to give up their *joie de vivre* without a fight.

Becoming Modern while Remaining Ottoman – Enter Rakı

During the reign of Mahmut II (1808-1839) and later Tanzimat (1839-1876), not only was alcohol consumption tolerated by authorities but for the first time in the history of the empire, the elite started to appreciate rather than shame or tolerate drinking in public. In the meantime, the authorities relaxed the regulations on running a *meyhane* so much so that some foreigners were able to open them near mosques. According to official registers dating back to 1850, there were 115 *meyhanes* operating in ten districts excluding Galata and the Golden Horn. (We can safely assume that there were more *meyhanes* in Galata alone.)

Meanwhile, *meyhane* culture went through a transformation, and examples of what is today called a "classical *meyhane*" sprang up all around the city. And, it was in these grand *meyhanes* that *rakı* eventually dethroned wine – so conclusively that *rakı* and *meyhane* became indistinguishable. How did *rakı* attain this enviable status?

The first reason was quite pragmatic: while the Quran explicitly forbade the consumption of wine, it made no specific reference to *rakı* for the simple reason that the distillation process had not been discovered during the time of its appearance.

And, Ottoman rulers, although they were in favor of modernization, were still Muslims and had to adhere to the basic principles of the holy book. The second – more important – reason was political in nature.

Wine had always been seen as belonging to a foreign, ‘*other*’, Western and non-Muslim world. And, notwithstanding their desire to modernize, Ottoman rulers also wanted to preserve that which they deemed exclusive to their culture – their Ottomanness. *Rakı*, distinctly Levantine, or even Istanbulite, with its unique aroma, color, and taste, was as Ottoman as it got. And, interestingly, early republican rulers (almost all of whom were originally from the Balkans and had a taste for *rakı*, albeit without anise), who like their predecessors, wanted to preserve their Turkishness while modernizing, also found *rakı* to be the answer, reinforcing its identification with *meyhane* culture even further.

A New Wave of Conservatism

Turkey witnessed a massive rise in social conservatism following the end of World War II. Religion, once again, came to occupy a dominant place in social and cultural milieux and *rakı* came to be perceived as one of the sources of modern evil, so *meyhanes* were frowned upon as establishments to avoid. Meanwhile, the ruling party in the 1950s – Democratic Party (DP) – initiated a pervasive urban renewal project, which gained momentum in the 1980s and even after the turn of the millennium. Such projects dramatically reorganized the city’s major arteries and left Istanbul’s agoras in a state of atrophy; the construction of Eminönü Square and the coastal road, destructions in Tophane, and renewal projects undertaken in Topkapı, Harbiye, and Tarlabaşı destroyed centuries-old boroughs, swallowed up historical agoras, and confined old *meyhanes* and their habitués to history.

As I noted above, however, *meyhanes* are social institutions that live and breathe, and respond to challenges. When their very existence is threatened, they mutate and metamorphose into entities well-equipped to deal with the threat they face. And, that is exactly what they did.

An invigorated meyhane

Their malleability and vibrancy have allowed *meyhanes* to respond to Turkish society’s changing tastes and preferences in a convincing manner. Although the majority of the changes outlined below have taken place in the 21st century, their roots can be traced back to the early years of the republic and well into the 1980s. The early republican beer gardens that the authorities encouraged and even urged not only men but entire families to frequent, and then in time, music halls, fairs, various state officers’ clubs; open-air, summer restaurants, and, last but not least, 1980s taverns all paved the way for the following changes to occur.

Aggressive neoliberalization policies that were initiated in the early 1980s brought about sweeping changes in the way Istanbulites lived their lives and comported themselves toward others, while their entertainment preferences were also impacted by the said changes. *Meyhanes* were transformed from a ritualistic space, which one frequents daily for a short while to an entertainment establishment, which one frequents less often but spends long hours at. This meant that the *meyhanes* had to adjust themselves to cater to demands and needs that they had not faced before – such as a more sterile space or a more extensive selection of mezzes.

First and foremost, *meyhanes* have embraced a more sterile and aesthetic ambiance. From the lighting to the interior decorations, from ventilation to sound insulation, every aspect of *meyhanes* has been carefully shaped to create a more pleasant and inviting atmosphere., to captivate the senses and provide a memorable experience.

Furthermore, the new *meyhanes* aim to be more inclusive, welcoming people from all walks of life. Thanks to the hard work of feminist and LGBTIQ+ movements, massive progress has been recorded in this area, particularly in terms of gender equality. Women now play a prominent role, and some own or operate their own *meyhanes*. However, there is still work to be done to ensure access for disadvantaged groups.

Additionally, we are witnessing a shift toward chef-oriented venues, where culinary excellence takes center stage. These establishments offer a rich variety of mezzes, which were not traditionally served in *meyhanes* until a few decades ago. These *meyhanes* are all renowned for their unique selection of mezzes made from the freshest ingredients, often served without waiting for customers' orders. These culinary-driven establishments are also improving their menus to cater to a wider range of dietary preferences, including vegan and vegetarian options.

Underlying all these changes is a major transformation that is not exclusive to Istanbul. *Meyhanes*, like pubs, which were once spaces oriented towards the humble working classes, are being transformed into places where the middle classes enjoy themselves. When it comes to *meyhanes* and *rakı* though, there's another, very specific and material (read as economic) reason behind this transformation. The excessive tax levied on alcohol (which skyrocketed from 51.48 YTL per liter in 2010 to an astonishing 602.48 YTL in May 2022) and the latest surge in inflation, which caused an unprecedented increase in costs (including rent, utilities, ingredients, and of course, alcohol) have placed a hefty burden on *meyhane* owners, who in turn, have had to raise their own prices. This economic barrier means the *meyhane* is no longer a space for lower classes – or even middle classes – but becomes exclusive to affluent members of society.

However, some aspects of the *meyhane* culture remain unaltered. For instance, the emphasis on the focal role mezzes (notwithstanding the changes they have gone through) and conversation prevails. So do the references to *meyhane* rituals and code of conduct, which are accorded such importance that portraits of those who are deemed to embody them adorn the walls of new *meyhanes*. One is likely to come across the photograph of the founder of the republic and a prominent *rakıophile* Atatürk, holding what appears to be a glass of *rakı* in his right hand (in the original photo the glass he holds contains *ayran*, a drink made by mixing yogurt with water). Surrounding him is a circle of friends all brought together by their passion for *rakı* and *meyhane* including singers such as Müzeyyen Senar, Safiye Ayla, and Neşet Ertaş, actors Cahide Sonku, Afife Jale, Fatma Girik, Sadri Alışık and Ayhan Işık, journalist and *rakı* guru Aydın Boysan, and literary figures like the poets Nazım Hikmet, Orhan Veli, Can Yücel, and Cemal Süreya, and Edip Cansever, and authors including Tomris Uyar, Leyla Erbil, Sevim Burak, and Sait Faik Abasıyanık, and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar.

Not only did such figures habituate their local *meyhanes*, but *meyhane* as an institution occupied a key place in the literary and poetic imagery of the first half of the 20th century. *Birinci Yeni* aka *Garip* and *İkinci Yeni* (First and Second New) movements in poetry and the social realist movement in poetry and literature produced odes to *meyhane*, assigned it a binding role in the community, and underlining its perennial

significance for the construction and enactment of Istanbuliteness. In fact, it can be argued that it is this persistent presence of *meyhane* in these art forms that partially legitimizes its existence, giving *meyhane* culture a materiality that all Istanbulites can cling to. And perhaps, at least partially, it was such eulogizing of *meyhane* by the intellectual, artistic figures that took it from being a drinking venue exclusive to poor men to an unarguably key component of modern life from the later 19th century onwards.

Meyhanes Elsewhere – Virtual and Mobile

Recent events, specifically the COVID-19 pandemic and the intensification of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's already tight grip on Turkey, have led *meyhane* aficionados to invent novel ways to continue to enjoy their favorite 'establishments'. During the pandemic, online *meyhanes* have emerged as virtual spaces where people can still enjoy the authentic *meyhane* atmosphere. These virtual *meyhanes* can even be construed as re-enactments of the nostalgic establishments that many wistfully yearn for as it is conversation and *rakı* that are at the center of the experience and not food and music.



Furthermore, the strengthening of Erdoğan's heavy hand in Turkey has led to an unprecedented secular exodus, though this vast, new group that has taken leave of Istanbul in reaction to attacks on their ways of life is not homogenous. However, there is one cultural institution that unites them: *meyhane*.

And it was this unquenchable desire that produced the pop-up *meyhane*, a mobile *meyhane* that is set up in a pre-determined physical location in London once every month (follow us on Instagram: [istanbulelsewhere](#)). Those who attended these enjoyed delicious mezzes and hearty conversations as they sipped away at their *rakı*. Pop-up *meyhanes* in Amsterdam, Berlin, Toronto, Sydney, Copenhagen, and Geneva among others followed suit and offered secular professionals who took leave of Istanbul in recent years a space that allowed them to embrace their identity as Istanbulites.

In sum, Istanbul *meyhanes* have recently undergone a remarkable transformation, embracing a sterile and aesthetic ambiance, promoting inclusivity, and showcasing a rich culinary experience. But some things have not changed at all: Istanbulites have always cherished a vibrant culture of socializing and camaraderie. Throughout history, they have gathered in *meyhanes*, partaking in the rich tradition of conviviality, conversation, and community.

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Politics & Economics



Turkey: Political developments Autumn 2023

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Faced with high inflation, a long-running economic crisis, a united opposition and the aftermath of massive twin earthquakes, Turkish Pres. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's two-decade hold on power overcame its steepest electoral challenge to date this spring. How he was able to win another term as president is a matter of some debate, but the conclusion is that Turkey and the international community it inhabits are left with the devil they know. The post-election period will become a testing ground for two alternative hypotheses – the first that a president now secure for another five years can afford to be more tolerant of domestic dissent, will pursue a more orthodox economic policy and try to soften his image abroad, particularly given Turkey's reliance on external credit. The second not necessarily conflicting scenario any show of moderation will be superficial, that Mr Erdoğan, both by temperament and expediency, will be reluctant to loosen the reins of power, given he goes back to the polls in municipal elections early next year.

The problems both he and Turkey face are immense. When the dust settled after the Feb. 6 earthquakes, more than 50,000 Turkish citizens had perished and at least 3 million had been displaced.³⁹ Critics pointed fingers at the government's slow initial response for compounding the loss of life. At the time, the tremors were thought to have caused irreversible damage not just to impacted cities, but also to the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and, along with it, Erdoğan's re-election prospects. The precedent was the 1999 Izmit earthquake which helped force the implosion of the post-war political establishment.

History did not repeat itself. Never one to play defence, Erdoğan pushed ahead a mere two days after the disaster by announcing the state would rebuild destroyed cities within a year.⁴⁰ Disregarding whether this was possible amid endless piles of rubble, a majority of Erdoğan's voters stuck with him in the May elections on the impression, according to pollsters,⁴¹ that reconstruction efforts would be swifter under continued AKP rule than under the opposition, which did not have a comparable track record in urban transformation.

³⁹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/turkiye/turkey-earthquake-emergency-situation-report-15082023>

⁴⁰ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-02-08/Erdoğan-vows-building-blitz-to-renew-quake-hit-areas-within-year?sref=4kxkQT8E#xj4y7vzkg>

⁴¹ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/pollsters-see-support-Erdoğan's-akp-largely-unsathed-despite-quake-2023-03-03/>

The opposition blamed much of the earthquake damage on the government's lax building code enforcement and the AKP's friendly ties with construction companies, grown fat on a 20-year country-wide building spree. For the president's supporters, this criticism turned out to be a strength. Experience in managing large and rapid construction efforts was an asset, especially for displaced voters looking to get out of tent encampments and back into proper homes.

Direct compensation⁴² to earthquake-impacted families also helped to boost the president's image along with the mass relocation of displaced families to newly built container camps,⁴³ complete with schools, playgrounds, food stores and mosques.

By May 14, when the first round of the presidential and parliamentary elections took place, the majority of government supporters in the earthquake zone were sheltered, with regular access to food, water, and if eligible, they were receiving government-issued financial support. This relief effort negated the initially weak response. Erdoğan maintained electoral dominance⁴⁴ even in provinces where there was catastrophic loss of life. Election day logistics, complicated by mass displacement might have worked in the government's favour by keeping the disaffected from the polls. After first-round ballots were tallied, Erdoğan secured 49.24% of the vote while the main opposition candidate Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu claimed 45.07% and the remaining votes went to a third candidate.⁴⁵ The results contradicted forecasts by Turkey's most credible political polling companies, which had fuelled opposition confidence it might even win the contest in the first round⁴⁶.



Instead, elections went to a second-round run-off on May 28, in which Erdoğan claimed a 52.1% of votes, a comfortable margin of more than 2 million votes over his opponent Kılıçdaroğlu.⁴⁷ How did this happen? Erdoğan's mandate remained firm over a core voter base of pro-business conservatives, beneficiaries from a network of clientelism baked into Turkish society through 20 years of AKP rule.⁴⁸ In the same period, Erdoğan also consolidated his powers, particularly after a failed 2016 coup attempt, by eliminating, silencing or defanging challengers inside and outside his party, as evidenced by the 2016 jailing⁴⁹ of the charismatic Selahattin Demirtaş, former co-chair of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party, as well as the threat of jail time through the pending court cases⁵⁰ of the charismatic Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu of the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), who is regarded as his biggest threat. While the pundits may have overestimated the strength of opposition, they may also have underestimated the impact of Turkey's autocratic slide. Erdoğan's use of state resources and institutions to gain the electoral edge, his stranglehold over media and intimidation of dissent were behind the conclusion of the election monitoring teams of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), that the

⁴² <https://bianet.org/haber/president-Erdoğan-promises-monetary-compensation-and-rapid-rebuilding-efforts-274290>

⁴³ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/07/27/turkey-earthquakes-nurdagi-rebuild/>

⁴⁴ <https://turkeyrecap.substack.com/p/infographics-voting-trends-in-turkeys>

⁴⁵ <https://apnews.com/article/turkey-electoral-board-results-confirmed-b12904cb08531897a9f7cf4aa91281e6>

⁴⁶ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/polls-show-Erdoğan-lags-opposition-by-more-than-10-points-ahead-may-vote-2023-03-13/>

⁴⁷ <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/elections/ysk-certifies-turkiyes-election-results-Erdoğan-victory>

⁴⁸ https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/fachpublikationen/Berk_Esen_why_did_Turkish_democracy_collapse.pdf

⁴⁹ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/06/07/turkey-end-abuse-criminal-proceedings-against-selahattin-demirtas>

⁵⁰ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-63977555>

elections took place on an “unlevel playing field.”⁵¹ The ‘truism’ that Turkish elections may not be fair but were free has also come within the crosshairs of credible academic speculation that the government manipulated results by a significant amount of percentage points in rural and provincial constituencies where there were few or no election monitors.

In pre-election surveys,⁵² Erdoğan’s main opponent, Kılıçdaroğlu polled lower than other prospective opposition candidates. Along with his Kurdish-Alevi minority background, running Kılıçdaroğlu was a gamble for the opposition,⁵³ which lost not just the 2023 elections, but its best chance to defeat Erdoğan to date.

As a result, the united opposition bloc has since disbanded. Its smaller conservative factions have broken away to form a joint parliamentary group⁵⁴. Meanwhile, and more significantly, the two larger opposition bloc parties – the CHP and the nationalist İYİ Party have dissolved their coalition and are currently preparing to run separate candidates in the upcoming March 2024 municipal elections,⁵⁵ likely to their own detriment and to the ruling bloc’s advantage. On the parliamentary level, the 2023 elections represented a clear shift towards conservative and nationalist lawmakers, which now hold more than 400 of Turkish parliament’s 600 seats.⁵⁶ While the AKP and its allied Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), secured 322 seats, short of the 360-seat supermajority, they aim to redraft the nation’s constitution.

Turkey’s Kurdish minority, which divides its votes across various parties, will be further defined by the fate of a prominent Kurdish parliamentarian with the CHP, Sezgin Tanrikulu. He’s currently facing severe backlash and a possible court case after asserting in a TV appearance⁵⁷ his right to criticize the Turkish Armed Forces, a near-sacred institution for many secular CHP voters. The result of Tanrikulu’s ongoing troubles will serve as a bellwether for Kurdish politicians’ ability to speak independently, regardless of party affiliation, as some CHP officials have suggested the party is reacting to the election loss by reverting to a purer version of the nationalist ideals set out by the nation’s founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk,⁵⁸ likely at the expense of minority voices and divergent opinions.

More broadly, the implications of the 2023 elections are likely to reverberate in the 2024 municipal elections, in which some political commentators suggest Ankara and Istanbul may flip back to AKP control after the upset CHP victories in the 2019 municipal elections.⁵⁹



Another key issue is who will lead the main opposition CHP following the party’s congress in November, when delegates cast votes to either reaffirm Kılıçdaroğlu’s leadership or replace him. Following his electoral loss, Kılıçdaroğlu has faced constant calls to step down from the party chairmanship and has been criticized by

⁵¹ <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/turkiye/543552>

⁵² <https://bianet.org/haber/poll-Erdoğan-trails-both-İmamoğlu-and-yavas-by-over-10-points-255426>

⁵³ <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2023/03/meet-kemal-Kılıçdaroğlu-turkeys-long-derided-opposition-head-who-could-dethrone>

⁵⁴ <https://www.duvarenglish.com/opposition-future-and-felicity-parties-form-joint-parliamentary-group-news-62678>

⁵⁵ <https://medyascope.tv/2023/08/28/key-opposition-coalition-partner-indicates-electoral-alliance-will-not-reunite-heading-into-2024-local-elections/>

⁵⁶ <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2023/05/turkeys-new-parliament-50-shades-nationalism-conservatism>

⁵⁷ <https://www.gerceknews.com/turkey/kurdish-deputy-faces-investigation-after-criticizing-turkish-army-221538h>

⁵⁸ <https://turkeyrecap.substack.com/p/jets-cant-get-enough>

⁵⁹ <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2019/06/ekrem-İmamoğlu-chp-wins-istanbul-mayor-race-blow-to-akp.html>

commentators on all sides for failing to concede defeat.⁶⁰ The current leading challenger for the CHP chairmanship is Özgür Özel,⁶¹ although his ability to re-enthuse the party remains largely untested.

Turkish secularists can at least celebrate one victory: the runaway success of Turkey's National Women's Volleyball team in championship after championship and which has come to symbolize progressive lifestyles and empathy for the LGBTI community, sentiments alien to pro-government media and the dominant public discourse⁶² elsewhere.

On June 3, Mr Erdoğan unveiled a new and more overtly technocratic presidential cabinet⁶³ which has increased speculation that he will soften his "Turkey against the world" approach in foreign policy and intent and appease market sentiment to try at least to reverse negative economic trends⁶⁴ by appeasing market sentiment. Gone was the combative, and ex-interior minister Suleyman Soylu whose hard-line approach was deemed to make him a possible successor to Erdoğan.⁶⁵ Infamous for anti-US sentiments – he once told the US ambassador to take his dirty paws off Turkey⁶⁶ – his removal is being interpreted as an attempt to restore a semblance of normalcy to that alliance. Former-state intelligence chief Hakan Fidan now heads the foreign ministry and signals a possible drive to a growing rapprochement with neighbouring Arab nations such as Syria, Egypt and the Emirates, many of whose top officials Fidan had been personally meeting in prior months through backchannel negotiations.⁶⁷ He is being replaced at intelligence by the US-trained scholar, İbrahim Kalın, a former government spokesman who, rightly or wrongly, has been seen as an intellectual and moderating force, particularly in foreign policy, with considerable influence over the president. Foreign investor-friendly Mehmet Şimşek was wooed back into the cabinet as finance minister; Hafize Gaye Erkan (a co-CEO at the troubled First Republic Bank) is the new Central Bank governor both signalling if not a U-turn, a slowdown in the projectory of unorthodox monetary policy, which had led to the multi-year collapse of the Turkish lira's value against major foreign currencies.⁶⁸ Investors remain sceptical about the long-term trajectory of Turkey's economic policies, but four sharp and consecutive hikes to the benchmark interest rate of more than 20 percentage points between June and September⁶⁹ have proved to serve as initial steps in what promises to be a war of attrition to control a rate of inflation, that hovered at just under 60 percent in August.⁷⁰ The need to get the economy under control is generally regarded as the reason behind a growing rapprochement with those neighbours who were seen as adversaries less than two years ago.⁷¹ Turkey seeks new financing⁷² and investment⁷³

⁶⁰ <https://turkeyrecap.substack.com/p/divided-we-kemal>

⁶¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIQ65P5XdWY>

⁶² <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/03/world/middleeast/turkey-womens-volleyball.html>

⁶³ <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/147386/president-Erdoğan-unveils-his-cabinet>

⁶⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jun/03/turkish-president-recep-tayyip-Erdoğan-announces-new-cabinet>

⁶⁵ <https://yetkinreport.com/en/2020/08/24/successor-of-Erdoğan-albayrak-soylu-someone-else/>

⁶⁶ <https://www.gerceknews.com/turkey/soylu-to-washington-take-your-dirty-hands-away-from-turkey-218622h>

⁶⁷ <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/90132>

⁶⁸ <https://www.ft.com/content/1ea9cf66-ca6b-453d-9e2a-e5ae15877a70>

⁶⁹ <https://www.ft.com/content/c69b7401-6d71-43da-843b-e3c8ad43a20c>

⁷⁰ <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=T%C3%BCketici-Fiyat-Endeksi-A%C4%9Fustos-2023-49650&dil=1>

⁷¹ <https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/notes-de-lifri/after-divorce-frosty-entente-turkeys-rapprochement-united-arab-emirates>

⁷² <https://www.reuters.com/markets/saudi-discussing-5-billion-deposit-turkey-saudi-finance-ministry-spx-2022-11-22/>

⁷³ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkeys-Erdoğan-ends-gulf-tour-with-abu-dhabi-visit-2023-07-19/>

without the humiliation of turning to the much denounced IMF.⁷⁴ Notably, the World Bank offered to extend \$35 billion in financing to Turkey,⁷⁵ shortly after Erdoğan promised in July⁷⁶ to put to parliament Sweden's application to join NATO when it reconvened after the summer. Turkey along with Hungary⁷⁷ remain standouts on approving Swedish membership following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, although Finland's application was approved in April 2023.⁷⁸

Ankara's reputation as transactional foreign policy actor was enhanced by attempting to link NATO expansion to US approval for the Turkey's stalled F-16 fighter jets⁷⁹ – which US State department officials deny being possible.⁸⁰ It has also tried to link the Swedish application to its own stalled application to EU accession ahead of the NATO July summit in Vilnius.⁸¹ German Chancellor Olaf Scholz along with several Brussels officials promptly brushed off the suggestion as an attempt to link two separate and highly complicated processes.⁸² Turkey's EU accession has been frozen since 2018 and broader EU relations remain tense apart from recent rapprochement efforts with Greece.⁸³

Turkey continues to sit on the fence over Ukraine, trading with both sides, which it justifies in its self-appointed role as a mediator in the conflict. It provides military assistance to Ukraine while purchasing gas and oil from Russia – payments for which it was able to postpone until after the May elections.⁸⁴ Russian state energy corporation Rosatom continues to build Turkey's first nuclear power plant in Mersin,⁸⁵ a deal that will bind the two nations for decades to come. During a September meeting with Vladimir Putin in Sochi, Erdoğan also hinted at the possibility of a second Rosatom-built nuclear power plant on Turkey's Black Sea coast.⁸⁶ The stated purpose of the meeting was to reinstate the deal in which Russia allowed safe passage for grain and food products being shipped from Ukrainian ports. That agreement collapsed in July and the Sochi meeting made little progress in getting it re-instated.

As Turkey's role as mediator is called into question patience in Western capitals over Sweden has worn thin. Failure to approve Sweden's bid in October could result in heightened tension with NATO partners. In September, the US Treasury sanctioned five Turkish firms for helping transfer 'dual-use goods' to Russia.⁸⁷ Any number of

⁷⁴ <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/energy/finance/turkey-not-to-reopen-imf-chapter-president-Erdoğan/21870>

⁷⁵ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-09-05/world-bank-in-talks-to-double-turkey-exposure-to-35-billion-1m63my17>

⁷⁶ <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2023/09/Erdoğan-says-turkey-will-keep-promise-swedens-nato-bid-if-us-approves-f-16s>

⁷⁷ <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/hungary-pm-criticizes-ukraine-says-no-rush-ratify-swedens-nato-bid-2023-09-25/>

⁷⁸ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_213448.htm

⁷⁹ <https://bianet.org/haber/Erdoğan-links-turkeys-f-16-purchase-to-sweden-s-nato-membership-285482>

⁸⁰ <https://www.state.gov/briefings/department-press-briefing-july-10-2023/>

⁸¹ <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/Erdoğan-links-swedens-nato-membership-turkeys-eu-accession-2023-07-10/>

⁸² <https://www.politico.eu/article/Erdoğan-turkey-into-eu-sweden-join-nato/>

⁸³ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/7/12/mitsotakis-Erdoğan-hail-positive-climate-in-greece-turkey-ties>

⁸⁴ <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/russia-agrees-deferred-gas-payments-turkish-energy-minister-says-2023-05-03/>

⁸⁵ <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/energy/nuclear/turkey-to-complete-1st-unit-of-nuclear-power-plant-by-may-2023/33634>

⁸⁶ <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/149253/-president-Erdoğan-meets-with-president-putin-of-russia>

⁸⁷ <https://www.reut>⁸⁷ <https://www.ft.com/content/1ea9cf66-ca6b-453d-9e2a-e5ae15877a70>

⁸⁷ <https://www.ft.com/content/c69b7401-6d71-43da-843b-e3c8ad43a20c>

⁸⁷ <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=T%C3%BCketici-Fiyat-Endeksi-A%C4%9Fustos-2023-49650&dil=1>

⁸⁷ <https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/notes-de-lifri/after-divorce-frosty-entente-turkeys-rapprochement-united-arab-emirates>

additional measures could be imposed on Ankara if Western governments feel the need ante up pressure on Turkey to curtail cooperation with Russia. Yet the ever-resourceful Mr Erdoğan is more than capable of turning Western censure to his advantage in consolidating his conservative-nationalist voter base ahead of the 2024 municipal elections.

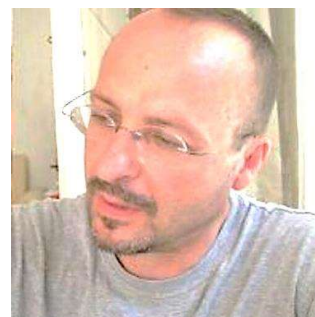
Please note that this report was compiled with great assistance from Turkey Recap which, unless you have a Bloomberg machine on your desk, has become the most comprehensive and reliable source of news about Turkey in English. For those who want to remain informed on a more regular basis or read the odd quirky feature, it is an invaluable tool. A subscription is not expensive and goes some way to supporting the precarious cause of independent journalism in Turkey. Please check out <https://turkeyrecap.substack.com/> which invites you to subscribe. Click “no thanks” to inspect the free-of-charge front page.



Earthquake, Elections and Turkey's economy in 2023

by Bülent Gökay

Professor of International Relations
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Turkey entered into an election period as a massive earthquake struck Southeastern Turkey on 6 February 2023. The M_w 7.8 earthquake was the strongest to occur in Turkey since the 1939 Erzincan earthquake of the same magnitude, and jointly the second strongest recorded in the country, after the 1668 North Anatolian earthquake. It was felt as far as Egypt, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Cyprus, and the Black Sea coast of Turkey.⁸⁷ It is worth remembering the earthquake on a smaller scale in Izmit in 1999 and the following economic crisis in 2001 which swept Erdoğan and his AKP to power. Since 2002, the AKP regime has supported the enormous growth of a government-

⁸⁷ <https://www.reuters.com/markets/saudi-discussing-5-billion-deposit-turkey-saudi-finance-ministry-spx-2022-11-22/>

⁸⁷ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkeys-Erdoğan-ends-gulf-tour-with-abu-dhabi-visit-2023-07-19/>

⁸⁷ <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/energy/finance/turkey-not-to-reopen-imf-chapter-president-Erdoğan/21870>

⁸⁷ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-09-05/world-bank-in-talks-to-double-turkey-exposure-to-35-billion-lm63my17>

⁸⁷ <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2023/09/Erdoğan-says-turkey-will-keep-promise-swedens-nato-bid-if-us-approves-f-16s>

⁸⁷ <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/hungary-pm-criticizes-ukraine-says-no-rush-ratify-swedens-nato-bid-2023-09-25/>

⁸⁷ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_213448.htm

⁸⁷ <https://bianet.org/haber/Erdoğan-links-turkeys-f-16-purchase-to-sweden-s-nato-membership-285482>

⁸⁷ <https://www.state.gov/briefings/department-press-briefing-july-10-2023/>

⁸⁷ <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/Erdoğan-links-swedens-nato-membership-turkeys-eu-accession-2023-07-10/>

⁸⁷ <https://www.politico.eu/article/Erdoğan-turkey-into-eu-sweden-join-nato/>

⁸⁷ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/7/12/mitsotakis-Erdoğan-hail-positive-climate-in-greece>
[ers.com/world/us-sanction-five-turkey-based-firms-broad-russia-action-2023-09-14/](https://www.ers.com/world/us-sanction-five-turkey-based-firms-broad-russia-action-2023-09-14/)

⁸⁸ *The Guardian*, 21 February 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/feb/20/turkey-new-6-point-4-magnitude-earthquake-hatay>

allied construction sector. The wide-scale building campaign, so-called urban transformation, played an important role in the AKP's neoliberal market reforms combined with targeted clientelism and other forms of neo-patrimonialism, in which construction sector and urban land and rent have been given more priority in the government agenda than they had ever before. During the last 20+ years, the construction sector accounts for 5.4 % of total GDP and employed 1.5 million people (2020 figures); and its contribution to GDP reached approximately 35% when triggered economic activities of other sectors in Turkey are taken into account. Turkey-based construction companies also succeeded in increasing their footprints in the global market with the volume of new projects reaching 12.8 billion euros.⁸⁹

This rapid and widespread construction frenzy was part and parcel of Turkey's fast neoliberal growth model, which was (mis)managed by the AKP regime: to build large scale modern, even luxurious looking, accommodation for the working people of Turkey as quickly as possible, and as cheaply as possible too. For this to be achieved corners were cut and all safety regulations were ignored. This growth model was not invented by the AKP, it can be traced back to the initiation of neoliberal policies and the wider culture of neoliberal restructuring in Turkey in the period which ran from the decisions taken on 24 January 1980 to the military coup which took place in September of the same year, which eliminated all real and potential resistance to neoliberalism in the country. The governments in the 1980s and 90s started to transform urban areas, by building and expanding cheap, shoddy buildings for the working people of Turkey.⁹⁰

The AKP regime, after 2002, took this one step further, through much more intensive construction-based wealth accumulation. As a result, economic activity expanded significantly, and huge wealth was transferred to a few major construction companies; while at the same time reasonably cheap, affordable accommodation was created for millions of people. Giant buildings, modern-looking apartment blocks were constructed in all urban areas, replacing previous temporary constructions, all of which created an aura of modernity and progress. However, underneath that modern, even ultra-modern, look, the construction was weak and shoddy, lots of corners were cut, all safety regulations ignored, in order to build quickly and cheaply. Ambitious construction companies, seeking to maximise their profits by delivering their projects earlier than scheduled, failed to meet basic conditions of safety. The construction sector has been the backbone of many emerging nations during the last 30 years, triggering activity in scores of other sectors. During this period, banks, under the strong lead of the World Bank and IMF, pushed up consumers' purchasing ability by providing credit and mortgages, and business owners developed a whole variety of ways to attract consumers, from food to accommodation, and to entertainment. Turning Turkey into a construction zone, especially in big cities, has been an important lifeline for the AKP government in its 22 year in power. The construction sector and its related industries have grown rapidly over the past two decades, representing nearly one third of Turkey's GDP and employing millions of people. David Harvey, in 2017, in an interview said: "...in Istanbul, Turkey; there are construction cranes all over the place".⁹¹

⁸⁹ <https://fieec-statistical-report.eu/2021/turkey>

⁹⁰ Yeserin Elicin, "Neoliberal transformation of the Turkish city through the Urban Transformation Act", *Habitat International*, Volume 41, January 2014, pp. 150-155.

⁹¹ Vincent Emanuele, "Rebel Cities, Urban Resistance and Capitalism: a Conversation with David Harvey", *Counterpunch*, 1 February 2017.

The impacts of the February 2023 earthquake disaster undercut the country's manufacturing sector with supply chains and production lines affected in particular. Output was scaled back as some firms paused production due to the earthquakes, while new orders were affected, and supply-chain disruption was also evident. World Bank issued a rapid damage assessment report, the Global Rapid Post-Disaster Damage Estimation (GRADE) Report, in late February. Direct damages to residential buildings account for 53% (\$18 billion) of the total damage, with 28% of damage (\$9.7 billion) in non-residential buildings (e.g., health facilities, schools, government buildings, and private sector buildings), and 19% of damage (\$6.4 billion) related to infrastructure (e.g., roads, power, water supply). The bank estimates that the earthquakes would also shave at least half a percentage point off Turkey's forecast gross domestic product growth of 3.5% to 4% in 2023. The report acknowledges that recovery and reconstruction costs will be much larger, potentially twice as large, and that GDP losses associated to economic disruptions will also add to the cost of the earthquakes.⁹²

Some analysts predicted that the earthquake would end the Erdoğan era and his credibility. However, despite the ongoing deep economic problems and the catastrophic earthquake, Erdoğan managed to win the election in the second round. The election results haven't



smoothed over Erdoğan's wrongdoings; his re-election does not mean that he is popular, or that his policies have popular approval. In reality, Erdoğan failed to win the election in the first round, for the first time in his career, and won by a small margin in the runoff. This election result points more to the political bankruptcy of the CHP's, and its leader Kılıçdaroğlu's, campaign and its alliance with far-right nationalist parties than to Erdoğan's and AKP's success. In other words, the failure of opposition to connect with the masses and to speak with one voice and the lack of clear leadership was at the root of Erdoğan's success rather than his popularity. For instance, failing to understand changing global circumstances and geopolitical shifts, Kılıçdaroğlu embraced a roughly pro-Western, anti-Russian and openly pro-NATO position in an attempt to reset the country's traditional foreign policy discourse, but paid no attention to the costs of dependence on the EU and NATO. He kept mostly silent on the Kurdish question, and he appealed to xenophobic nationalist feelings and anti-refugee policies and declared an open war against refugees, the overwhelming majority of whom live in deep poverty without basic rights, because he claimed that the migrants are like "a flood of illegal people infiltrating our veins every day".⁹³



Researchers, looking at the official sources on employment between 2013 and 2021, show that there is a positive correlation between the number of jobs available and votes for the ruling AKP government. Especially important for these elections, the number of people in employment expanded significantly over the last three years. Erdoğan's vote, compared with the 2018 elections, declined by only 3 percent. This trend one can see everywhere where the majority of population is working class, even in big cities. In Istanbul, for instance, in the working-class districts of Bağcılar,

⁹² <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099022723021250141>

⁹³ *Aljazeera*, 18 May 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/18/turkeys-kilicdaroglu-promises-to-kick-out-refugees-post-election>

Zeytinburnu, Sultangazi, and Güngören, the level of decline in Erdoğan's vote was much smaller than the national average, and much higher in the traditionally social democratic middle-class districts of Kadıköy, Beşiktaş and Çekmeköy.⁹⁴

In all those Anatolian towns, where there is rapid industrialisation and significantly increased employment, the decline in Erdoğan's vote was much smaller. Therefore, one can conclude that the economic policy of Erdoğan, keeping interest rates low and continuing export, thus expanding employment, even at the expense of declining real wages and a cost-of-living crisis, seems to have worked for him. A majority of these workers are employed in KOBIs, small and medium size companies. The definition of this group of companies is a company employing up to 50 workers. In Turkey more than 3 million companies in the industrial production sector are in this category, employing 11,5 million workers.⁹⁵

As we look ahead into the rest of 2023 and 2024, a number of forces are set to shape Turkey's economy, the biggest being the country's energy predicament. Then there is the cost of living crisis, which in many ways defined 2022 and the first half of 2023 and could continue to temper economic growth even further. First and foremost, one has to recognise that today the crisis of Turkey is both a crisis of the global economy and a crisis of the Turkish Republic. The global conditions for the dependent economies like Turkey's are increasingly tight and attracting foreign capital becoming ever more difficult.

What needs to be done? It seems short-termism is now everywhere: most of the solutions put forward are about dealing with immediate problems rather than finding long-term and permanent solution to Turkey's long-term structural weaknesses. The authorities have tended to develop an inability to think more than a few months ahead, not only in Turkey but in many other countries too. The Turkish economy therefore remains caught between a rock and a hard place. Erdoğan's government is reluctant to impose orthodox neoliberal remedies yet is unable to formulate a viable long-term alternative. Turkey is on the edge of actually running out of usable foreign exchange reserves and face the risk of a classic balance of payments crisis. AKP's current policy mix, raising interest rates slowly is yet another attempt at crisis management rather than a transition to a new regime of accumulation. The purpose of the current policy seems to be to provide protection for large sections of the population, especially those who work in KOBIs, from the effects of economic freefall, and to buy time for the regime until next year's local elections.

Conferences, Book Reviews & Publications

⁹⁴ Utku Balaban in *Birikim*, 21 May 2023, <https://birikimdergisi.com/guncel/11406/isci-sinifinin-siyasette-soz-soyleyebilmesinin-ve-ilk-etapta-burjuva-demokrasisinin-yeniden-tesisinin-on-kosulu-faburjuvaziye-donuk-dogrudan-bir-siyasi-hucumun-gelismesidir>

⁹⁵ Türkiye Odalar ve Borsalar Birliği, <https://www.tobb.org.tr/KobiArastirma/Sayfalar/TRninKOBileriBulteni.php>

Anglo-American Defense Projects in the Postwar Middle East: Cold War or Imperialism?

by **Behçet Kemal Yeşilbursa**

Lexington Books, 2023
ISBN 9781666926453 (cloth)|
ISBN 9781666926460 (e-book), 255pp
Foreword by **William Hale**



The book analyses the origins of Anglo-American defence alliances in the Middle East from 1945 to 1955, particularly in the context of the Middle East Command (MEC), the Middle East Defence Organization (MEDO), and the Northern Tier Defence Concept (NTDC), and it also explores the policies of the regional countries.

MEC was intended to solve the Anglo-Egyptian impasse, and it was a multilateral pact to replace the 1936 treaty; MEDO was launched in 1952; NTDC included Turkey, Pakistan and Iraq, among other states. This is significant because after the unsuccessful British attempts to form a defence organization in the Middle East after the Second World War, a 'Northern Tier' defence concept under American initiatives began to take shape. The Baghdad Pact (BP) involved Britain and four other nations. The "*Pact of Mutual Cooperation Between the Kingdom of Iraq, the Republic of Turkey, the United Kingdom, the Dominion of Pakistan, and the Kingdom of Iran*" of February 1955, is also known as the Middle East Treaty Organisation and it lasted for almost a quarter of a century. In 1958, the Hashemite monarchy of Iraq was overthrown by a coup d'état. The new Government of the Iraqi Republic decided to leave the Pact in the following year. After the crisis in Iraq, the United States became an associate member, and the BP was officially renamed Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) in that same year.

The author discusses these organizations from a "balance of threat" theoretical perspective. Countries' membership, important incidents, reciprocal accusations, and their general discourse against proposed defence organizations are analysed. He gives a chronological narrative; the arrangement of the material is descriptive and its focus is the players rather than the circumstances. A range of primary and secondary sources have been used, and the primary sources are mainly the UK and the US archival sources: the National Archives, London, and the National Archives, Washington. American sources examined also include papers from the Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas; the Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University Archives, Princeton, New Jersey; State Department papers in the FRUS series; Joint Chiefs of Staff papers; and National Security Council papers.

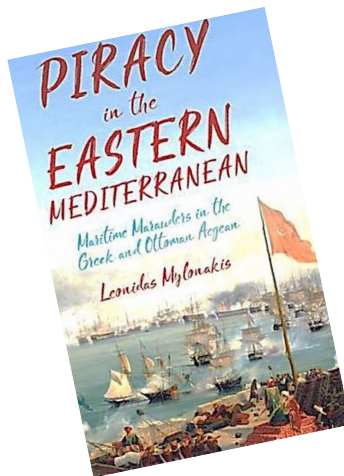
The book claims that the origins of defence projects in the Middle East after World War II are the decaying British and French imperial orders due to their relinquished control over the areas they had inherited from the Ottoman Empire after World War I; resurging nationalism throughout the Middle East (contributing further to the decline in British and French influence); the establishment of Israel and its victory in the 1948 war (which became a lasting source of conflict); and finally the rapidly increasing United States and Soviet interest in the region.

“The story of British and American policy towards the Middle East between 1945 and 1955 stands out as a crucial example of the process by which Britain’s previously dominant role in world politics was replaced by American power. The result, as Behçet Kemal Yeşilbursa aptly puts it, was a policy confused by the conflicting aims of Cold War defence, on the one hand, and British attempts to sustain their imperial role, on the other. In an original and illuminating study, based on thorough research in the British and American diplomatic archives, he illuminates the serious disagreements between the two partners in the post-war alliance, set against the context of a changing and unpredictable global environment.” (p vii) writes William Hale in his Foreword to the book, which sets the scene.

Highly praised by Ilan Pappé, Erik Jan Zürcher, and David Logan, this is an important book for anyone interested in the Middle East.

(The author, Behçet Kemal Yeşilbursa is currently a Professor in the Department of History, Uludağ University, Bursa, Turkey. His publications include a book on the Baghdad Pact. Currently, he is working on a manuscript on the formation of CENTO. He is the founding editor of the Journal of Anglo-Turkish Relations, JATR).

Çiğdem Balım
Indiana University



Piracy in the Eastern Mediterranean Maritime Marauders in the Greek and Ottoman Aegean

by **Leonidas Mylonakis**
IB Tauris, 2023
ISBN 9780755643608

This is a fascinating study on the continuation of piracy in the Aegean in the 19th and early 20th centuries – long after the heyday of the corsairs in the wider Mediterranean. The book begins with exploring the different definitions of piracy and makes a distinction between corsairing and privateering, both of which had links to state powers, and other pirates who operated outside of state control. Corsairs and privateers or ‘naval entrepreneurs’, answered to the state but were not paid by states, relying on captured booty or ransom income. Mylonakis’ focus is on the ‘independent’ pirate activities, although in practice these definitions and clear identities were often blurred. The study explores contested identities and changing geopolitical conditions where ‘maritime marauders manipulated governments into claiming them as patriots to protect themselves from persecution; likewise, governments manipulated the same marauders to irredentist ends’ (p123). Uniquely, the study rejects the ‘framework of imperial, colonial, and national history in favour of a trans-national approach’ (p123)

focusing on local actors who lived in borderland zones, with multiple national identities in the context of the multi-ethnic Greek and Ottoman Aegean.

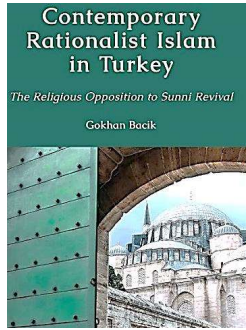
The heyday of Mediterranean corsairs in the 16th century was dominated by two groups: the Knights of St John based in Malta and the Barbary corsairs of the Ottoman vassal states in North Africa, with Hayrettin Barbarossa a leading figure. Barbarossa captured Algiers from Spain and conducted many raids before he was eventually rewarded as Admiral of the Ottoman navy in 1533. The Knightly Order of St John 'was the first pirate society' – 'essentially a criminal organisation' which had been driven out of the Holy Land to Rhodes then Malta. It came to an end in 1807 after the British captured Malta and banned slavery, transforming the island from a 'corsairs' castle to a British colonial naval base'. (p14) The 18th century had seen Ottoman control over Tunis, Tripoli and Algiers begin to slip as these states increasingly operated independently of the Porte and also fought each other. The entry of the US into the Mediterranean with a strong navy presence after 1815, and the French colonisation of Algeria in the 1830s, is seen as marking the end of the Barbary corsairs according to mainstream historians.

However, Mylonakis's research in the Ottoman and Greek archives shows that piracy in the eastern Mediterranean continued, although on a declining trend. Using data and reports from the archives, the author constructs an empirical timeline of the ebb and flow of piracy events. There is an increase in their number of piracy events in the lead up to the independence of Greece in 1830s; then there is a decline for a couple of decades as Greek and Ottoman forces cooperate to police the Aegean. This is temporarily disrupted during the Crimean War as Greece allied with Russia. There are reports of pirates pillaging ships carrying Moroccan and Ottoman pilgrims to the *haj*. There is also an increased presence of 'irregulars' – on both sides -- during the Greco-Ottoman war of 1897.

The 1860s bring important events that begin to reduce piracy activities. Following Italian unification, the new state took a hard line against piracy in the Adriatic and along its Mediterranean coastline. The pirate activities were by a wide international cast of characters – not only Italian, but also Greek, Albanian, Bosnian, and Arab – but which the Italian sources mostly referred to as 'Turks'. The opening of the Suez Canal brought a new source of lucrative piracy to the growing maritime trade in the eastern Mediterranean. But this time, piracy was met with increased policing by the UK and French imperial powers intent on keeping safe the eastern Mediterranean trade. Technology also mitigated against traditional piracy activities as from the 1860s onwards merchant shipping gradually moved away from sailing to – more difficult to intercept – steam-ships.

Along with growing world trade and greater international attention came efforts to legislate against piracy and regulate the seas. However, Mylonakis concludes that the data shows that the legislation did not have much impact in reducing piracy activities. Rather it was increased economic welfare and rapid growth in agriculture that offered would-be pirates alternative livelihoods that ultimately reduced piracy activities. This is a very original study that sheds light on a potentially obscure topic while at the same time illuminating the complexity of the broader historical trends in the region.

Mina Toksöz



Contemporary Rationalist Islam in Turkey: The Religious Opposition to Sunni Revival

by Gökhan Bacık
L.B. Tauris, London 2021
Paperback 2023
ISBN 9780755636785

This fascinating short work is divided into four main chapters, each of which draws together the insights of nine writers on contemporary Islam in Turkey who Bacık refers to as 'rationalists'. Bacık argues that there is a coherence in their approaches which is given by their mutual criticism of 'Sunni' Islam. He explores this successively by comparing their approaches to the Kuran, to the Hadis, to the Sharia, to Islamic history, to the Sunnah (the life of the Prophet), and finally to politics. In effect, Bacık seems to be claiming that there is a concerted attempt by the 'rationalists' to place Islam in a discernible historical context as, for instance, may be contrasted with the received view put forward by the official, state-run Diyanet [İşleri Başkanlığı] (The Department of Religious Affairs).

The writers he features are as follows: Hüseyin Atay; Yaşar Nuri Öztürk; Ömer Özsoy; M. Hayri Kırbasoğlu; İlhami Güler; İhsan R. Eliaçık; Mustafa Öztürk; İsrail Balcı, and Mehmet Azimli. Through a highly skilled use of detailed quotation from their works, he creates a sustained intellectual discussion that he rightly remarks questions some of the basic assumptions of the understood in Turkey. For writers whom he quotes do not received version of the Kuran is equally may not maintain that not least because there are so they may not regard the Sharia as the fundamental unchanging law that all believers should embody. Likewise, they may not wish to sustain the argument that the sciences of the world are already embodied within the Kuran, tacitly or explicitly.



way that Islam is usually example, he suggests that the necessarily believe that the the only form of the text; they the *hadis* are necessarily true, many traditions in circulation;

This last raises the question of who and where the kind of Islam is practised that he believes is being criticised. The idea that the Kuran holds the secrets to modern science is of course one of the Nurcu/Gülenist tenets. Bacık certainly equates the Gülenists with Sunni Islam. However, Bacık is equally critical of the *Diyanet*, and indeed of the form of Sunni Islam, which is proposed by the AKP, the party which has been in power for the last two decades in Turkey. Yet, these remarks are made in a curiously abstract way, as if these different institutions are not, in some way, a reflection of wider Turkish society. My own interpretation of the approaches that Bacık identifies as being Sunni would be that they are largely congruent with the religious understanding of the contemporary believer: the man in the street as it were. For example, Bacık suggests that the kind of Sunnism described by the disparaging authors whom he quotes is a rule-bound collective form of religion that stresses law over moral contemplation. This may be true, but I have a vivid memory of a Sunni villager saying to me already in the 1980s words to the effect that "You need to

understand that in the village we don't think about religion at all unless we need to: we go to the mosque, we pray quickly, and that's it. We can then do what we want".

This brings us to another point: the context of Republican Turkey is almost entirely absent. There is the occasional scanty remark, but nowhere is it noted, for instance, that the Kemalist interpretation of Islam at its outset was very clear that religious belief was not made up of the external rules of religious behaviour, hence freeing the believer to be at one with God. Nor is the gradual rise of Islam in the post 1946 Republic touched upon, whereby each decade saw an expansion of sanctioned religious conduct. But was this what the state wanted? Or was it imposed upon the state by the populist parties who saw the possibility of attracting support by promising to reintroduce greater Islamic practice into the secular Republic? This said, we can see why, I think, Bacık prefers to treat the treatise as focussed ruminations on the writings of nine Islamic intellectuals: he remarks at the beginning of the book that thinkers within Turkish Islam have been rather overlooked when it comes to transnational discussions about the place of Islam in the contemporary world and how it can be rethought. By presenting them here, floating above the everyday strife, there is the chance that they can be read in comparative fashion alongside other debates on Islam from other countries and spheres. Bacık has written a most stimulating work, one that all who are interested in Islam in Turkey will read with pleasure, all the more so as it provides such detailed insight into the thoughts of a number of thinkers whose work is not well known in the English-speaking world.

Alas, there is the only real fault in the book; though no fault of his own Bacık has not been well-served by the publisher. The tiny margins that publishers now work to must be taken into account, but the text has not been sub-edited for anything other than the grossest errors (presumably largely corrected by AI), leaving such infelicities in grammar and expression that the only thing to do is grit one's teeth and pretend that they are not there, a suspension of disbelief that is not always easy. What a pity! As a result of their saving a thousand pounds on copywriting fees, we are left with a result that is as flawed as it is illustrative of an author who has thought deeply and creatively about this question, one who deserves our congratulations.,

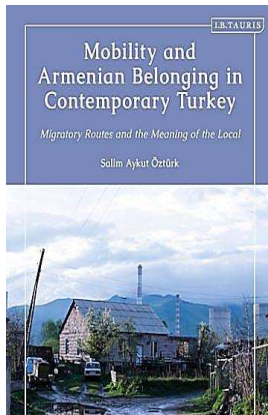
David Shankland

Director, Royal Anthropological Institute
50 Fitzroy Street, London



CYPRUS

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.



Mobility and Armenian Belonging in Contemporary Turkey:

Migratory Routes and the Meaning of the
Local

by **Salim Aykut Öztürk**

I.B. Tauris 2023,
ISBN 9780755645091, 205p

“What remains and becomes Armenian in a historically informed moment of increased mobility? Taking an anthropological approach with ethnographic data collected from Turkey and Armenia over almost 10 years, this book focuses on themes of migration, human movement, community-making and the conditions that facilitate mobility and place-making.” The book is very fittingly summarised on the back cover. While searching for the answer to the question, the author begins his own journey to find a different way of looking at how best to collect ethnographic data for analysis: “I started my research with an agenda of studying everyday relationships between Armenian citizen of Turkey and undocumented Armenian migrants in Istanbul. However, as I proceeded, I found a fragmented Armenian social life in the city: the relationships between Armenians from two different nation-state settings were limited, and both Armenian groups in the city were diverse to such an extent that it was impossible to suggest any distinct community based on a generalized definition of identity or a fixed disposition of locality. Research and analysis at the level of community proved to be of little use; I realized I needed to come up with a second and much more comprehensive level of analysis and a novel approach to ‘framing my informants’.” (p.13) He comes to the conclusion that in understanding the diversity of issues, a study which would follow the path of the usual studies of binaries of diasporans versus homelander is not sufficient in the case of the Armenians. The author then proceeds to look at minimal but significant movement of people between the old homeland Turkey and the new nation-state homeland Armenian Republic.

The book is largely based on the author’s doctoral thesis *En Route to Unity: Armenian Travellers and Dwellers in Twenty-First Century Turkey*, submitted to University College London (UCL) in 2020, which introduces the metaphor of ‘islands’ as does the book. The physical and imagined components of unity are dealt through a metaphor of islands, which does not define distinct and compartmentalized zones of culture, history, and economy; instead, it accounts for ongoing connection and movement despite physical and imagined barriers in/between Armenia and Turkey.

Each chapter of the book deals with people travelling and with transnational links. The **first** focuses on the author’s 40-hour bus journey from Istanbul to Yerevan via Georgia, and the narratives of shuttle-traders and bus crews making the journey are introduced. The **second** chapter examines the interviews with shuttle-traders and people deported from Turkey, who now live in Armenia. The **third** is about the lives of

undocumented Armenian migrants in Istanbul, Kumkapı. The **fourth** chapter is based on research among Armenian travellers in villages, former Armenian now Kurdish villages scattered through eastern and southeastern Turkey, while the **fifth** is based on the author's ethnographic and archival research in the neighbourhood of Kurtuluş in Istanbul. In this chapter the author demonstrates the links between local and national processes of Turkification and their impact on local Armenians. The changes in the names of the apartments illustrate how the Armenians negotiated their position as to Turkishness. The **sixth** chapter is about Kınalıada and the passengers on the boats to the island. The **seventh** and final chapter concerns the relationships between the Armenian and non-Armenian residents of Kınalıada.

The author finds that there is no consensus on 'what it takes to be Armenian?' and suggests that this lack of consensus provides a common ground for the subjects to identify themselves as being a part of the ancient and globally dispersed community of Armenians. He also suggests a closer look at the possible transformative effect of the current citizenship scheme of Armenia in catalysing some sort of bonding between Armenians on the two sides of the border.

The book has extensive bibliography (pp186-203), several useful maps and photographs.

Çiğdem Balım
Indiana University

Nota Bene:

Ayküt Öztürk has a PhD in Anthropology (University College London), an MA in Migration and Diaspora Studies (SOAS), and a BA in Political Science (Boğaziçi University).

He is a former Hrant Dink Foundation Fellow and was involved in civil society initiatives between Armenia and Turkey.

He is currently based in Copenhagen, Denmark, where he teaches anthropology/sociology.



RECENT AND FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE

Çaylı, Eray, Pınar Aykaç and Sevcan Ercan (eds.). *Architectures of Emergency in Turkey: Heritage, Displacement and Catastrophe*. (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023). ISBN: 9780755645329.

Sanlıkol, Mehmet Ali. *Reform, Notation and Ottoman Music in Early 19th Century Istanbul*. (Routledge, 2023). ISBN: 9781032413853.

HISTORY

Foss, Clive. *The Beginnings of the Ottoman Empire*. (Oxford University Press, 2022). ISBN: 9780198865438.

Özay, Mehmet. *Islamic Identity and Development after the Ottomans*. (Routledge, 2023). ISBN: 9781032215693.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Bodsworth, Roxanne T. *The Book of Hours: Poems for the Earthquake Survivors February 2023 in Türkiye and Syria*. (Sunwyse Writing and Celebrancy Services, 2023). ISBN: 100645764809.

Curley, Steven J. *Conversational Turkish: Learning to speak and understanding Turkish dialogues made easy*. (Independently published, 2023). ISBN: 9798856687810.

Fox, Margalit. *The Confidence Men: How Two Prisoners of War Engineered the Most Remarkable Escape in History*. (Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2022). ISBN: 101984853856.

Havlioğlu, Didem and Zeynep Uysal (eds.). *Routledge Handbook on Turkish Literature*. (Routledge, 2023). ISBN: 9780429279270.

Johanson, Lars (ed.). *Turkic Languages*. (Harrassowitz, 2023). ISBN: 10344718275X.

POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

Adam Yavuz, Devrim. *Democracy and Capitalism in Turkey: The State, Power, and Big Business*. (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023). ISBN: 9780755648962.

Doğan, Taner. *Communication Strategies in Turkey: Erdoğan, The AKP and Political Messaging* (paperback) (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022). ISBN: 9781838602246.

Gourisse, Benjamin. *Political Violence in Turkey, 1975-1980: The State at Stake*. (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023). ISBN: 9780755646470.

Hecker, Pierre, Ivo Furman and Kaya Akyıldız (eds.). *The Politics of Culture in Contemporary Turkey*. (Edinburgh University Press, 2023). ISBN: 9781474490290.

Hulagu, Funda. *Police Reform in Turkey: Human Security, Gender and State Violence Under Erdoğan*. (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022). ISBN: 9780755639915.

Özkeçeci-Taner, Binnur and Sinem Akgül-Açıkmeşe (eds.). *One Hundred Years of Turkish Foreign Policy (1923-2023): Historical and Theoretical Reflections* (Global Foreign Policy Studies). (Palgrave Macmillan, 2023). ISBN: 10303135858

Toksöz, Mina, Mustafa Kutlay & William Hale. *Industrial Policy in Turkey: Rise, retreat, and return*. (Edinburgh Studies on Modern Turkey; Edinburgh University Press, 2023). ISBN: 9781399510141

SOCIOLOGY AND RELIGION

Balcı, Bayram and Nicolas Monceau (eds.). *Turkey: A Century of Change in State and Society*. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2023). ISBN: 9783031334436.

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

Özkul, Derya and Hege Markussen. *The Alevis in Modern Turkey and the Diaspora: Recognition, Mobilisation and Transformation*. (Edinburgh University Press, 2022). ISBN: 9781474492027.

Sarıaslan, Kübra Zeynep. *Empowering Housewives in Southeast Turkey*. (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023). ISBN: 9780755646487.

MISCELLANEOUS

Mevlutoğlu, Arda. *Modern Turkish Airpower: The Turkish Air Force, 2020-2025* (Middle East@War) (Helion and Company, 2024). ISBN: 101804512281.

Terry, Bruce. *Bodrum Travel Guide 2023-2024: A Turkish Riviera Paradise for Adventure Seekers*. (Independently published, 2023). ISBN: 9798851733383.

Compiled by Arın Bayraktaroğlu

In Memoriam



Memorial for
Celia Kerslake
held at St Antony's College
on Wednesday 7 June 2023

Laurent Mignon
Professor of Turkish Literature
Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford



A moving memorial for Celia Kerslake was held at St Antony's College on 7 June 2023. This was an opportunity for her former colleagues at the Middle East Centre to commemorate her life and works in conjunction with those of Derek Hopwood, another Fellow of the Centre who passed away in 2020.

Guests in the fully packed Investcorp lecture theatre were not only reminded of Celia's outstanding achievements as a scholar in the field of Turkish linguistics and her numerous contributions to St Antony's College and what was at the time the Faculty of Oriental Studies, but they were also introduced by her sister Rosie Mac Gregor to aspects of her private and family life that they knew little about. They discovered, for instance, that Celia had been a talented and passionate gymnast in her youth, a fact that few if any of her colleagues and students would have guessed. While Roger Goodman, the Warden of St Antony's College, stressed the important roles she had played in college life and told the audience of her academic career, her former student Dimitris Antoniou, a Lecturer in Hellenic Studies at Columbia University, movingly and with much humour narrated how Celia as a tutor and supervisor helped him become the scholar he is today.

Laurent Mignon, Professor of Turkish literature at the University of Oxford and Celia's successor, underlined the importance of the works on Turkish Grammar that she co-authored with Aslı Göksel. He noted that they showcased a rare talent to turn the complexity of Turkish grammar into a fascinating read. Turning his attention to some of the debates that currently animate academic life in the United Kingdom, he stressed that Celia had been a pioneer in her own self-effacing way: In her writings on Turkish language and literature she had systematically engaged with and referred to scholarship written in Turkish. Indeed, she did not content herself to see Turkish language, literature and history as objects of study. She knew that colleagues in Turkey and Cyprus were also producing studies in Turkish on the subjects that interested her and she duly acknowledged them and their work, critically when needed, in her English language publications. This respect for the language and scholarship of the region she studied should be the starting point of any *decolonization of the curriculum*.

Reminding the audience that Celia had also been a literary translator, he noted that she had translated Aysel Özakin's novel *Genç Kız ve Ölüm* (The Prizegiving), the year she took her position at the University of Oxford and became a Fellow of St Antony's College and of the Middle East Centre. Mignon noted that the struggles of the main character of this feminist novel in a male-dominated world must have been familiar to Celia as she became one of the very few female academics of St Antony's Governing Body and the sole female academic of the Centre.

After the memorial, the Master of Ceremony and director of the Middle East Centre, Professor Eugene Rogan invited the guests to a drinks' reception during which Celia and Derek were fondly remembered.



Robert G. Ousterhout

16 January 1950 - 23 April 2023



Robert Ousterhout, Bob to friends and colleagues, was born in 1950 in Pendleton, Oregon, USA, the middle child of a family who immigrated from the Netherlands. He completed his undergraduate degree in Art History at the University of Oregon in 1973. He also attended the Institute of European Studies in Vienna, Austria on an exchange program between 1970 and 1972. In 1977, he completed his master's degree in the Art History program at the University of Cincinnati in Ohio. While continuing his doctoral, he taught at the University of Oregon for a year. He completed his doctorate at the University of Illinois under the supervision of Slobodan Ćurčić in 1982. In it, he examined and reinterpreted the Kariye Cami, an important late Byzantine church complex in Istanbul.

He worked at Urbana-Champaign between 1983 and 2006, teaching in the Historic Preservation Program in the School of Architecture. Bob was one of the founders of the Landscape and Architectural History Integrated Doctoral Program at the University of Illinois – where the authors of this obituary received their doctorate degrees – and served as the program's first-term director. Thanks to his mastery of Byzantine architecture and archaeology and his grasp of a broader geography and chronology, he was the senior researcher at the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS) in Paris, 1999–2000. The same year, he was invited to be a jury member at Harvard's Graduate School of Design. From 2007 until his retirement in 2017, he worked in the Departments of Art History and Archeology at the University of Pennsylvania, where he served as the Ancient World Research Center and PhD Program Coordinator. From 2015–2017, he was a senior fellow in the Getty Foundation's *Connecting Art Histories* (Integrating Art Histories) Program, which developed a mobile research seminar aiming to reevaluate Crusader art and architecture, led by Professor Scott Redford, that travelled in Israel, Palestine, Turkey, Jordan and Greece. From 2011 until his death, he designed and co-ran the Cappadocia Summer School with Professor Tolga Uyar, in which almost every student training as a Byzantinist or medievalist dreams of participating.

On his CV Bob lists his interests as “Byzantine and medieval architecture, monumental painting; the construction of sanctity in the eastern Mediterranean, specifically Istanbul, Thrace, Jerusalem and Cappadocia and dynamics of urbanism.” Rather than following Byzantium in an isolated, esoteric and linear chronology, Bob presented us with a striking network of relationships throughout his career, shaped by the collaboration of artist and builder in the production and use of spaces, the role of the patron, and the socio-cultural, political and religious dynamics. After his research at the Kariye Cami, he carried out field work and restoration projects for the Greek Archeology Department in Kavala, Ferecik and Dimetoka in Greece and in Cappadocia, Imbros, and also in the Zeyrek Cami (The Monastery of Pantokrator) with permits from the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. In addition, he presented as a guest lecturer at the Moscow Architectural Institute and the University of Jerusalem.

Bob loved examining buildings and their contexts. He conducted multiple joint fieldwork projects, such as with Professor Winfried Held on Imbros and with Professors Zeynep Ahunbay and Mehmet Ahunbay in Istanbul. Besides the monuments and the urban fabric of Constantinople and the nature of the Byzantine settlement in Cappadocia, Jerusalem loomed large in his interpretation of the construction of sanctity in the medieval world, and his publications focused on pseudo-spolia, the tattoos and architectural transferences. He published on the afterlives of the Byzantine culture that appeared in many different forms, whether in the architectural vocabulary of Russia and Ukraine, the overlaps between Byzantines and its neighbouring cultures (Seljuks, Armenians, Georgians and the Ottomans), or the reiterations of Hagia Sophia in the Ottoman imaginations. His work has been supported by numerous organisations such as Fulbright, Dumbarton Oaks, University of Illinois, University of Pennsylvania, the World Monuments Fund, the National Endowment Fund, UNESCO and the Onassis Foundation.

Fieldwork was of great importance to Bob. His concern for understanding the uniqueness of the Byzantine geography in the Mediterranean and preserving, understanding and sharing the remaining traces of this geography, especially the places of Constantinople. Whenever he had the opportunity, he would devote himself to his work in ruins, museums and archaeological sites, with his hat on his head,

sketchbook, notebook and camera in hand. He would make sure to draw his students into this world. Teaching by questioning how you learn was something he enjoyed very much. This approach extended outside of lectures, seminars and conferences, and could especially be seen at dinner tables – out would come his colourful anecdotes about food and life, mixed with his unique jokes. At the beginning of each summer, he would share his schedule with us, which included where he would spend the summer season, where he would swim, and with whom he would explore which areas and museums.

Bob was both a guiding and nurturing figure in Byzantine studies. For many years, he chaired the National Committee on Byzantine Studies in the USA and the Byzantine Studies Association of North America. Through these positions, he created and supported several networks of scholars and students from different parts of Byzantine geography, linking those from Greece, Serbia and Turkey with those in North America. Moreover, with the generations he raised and the bonds he created, he laid a strong foundation to ensure that these connections would not be interrupted by his death.

Bob was a caring compassionate teacher. He personally accompanied us in the first years of our doctoral field research; he stood by us in Antakya, İznik, Bursa, Athens or Thessaloniki and showed us what to look at and how to look. He would instruct us to ‘Go and commune with the buildings!’ He engraved this sentence on all of our minds, showing us the difference between looking and seeing. And he was always encouraging us to unravel the context of the building. He watched over us and what we did after the theses were written and the doctoral programs were completed.

Bob was a fun friend. He made it a habit to swim in the pool in the winter and in the flowing waters of his beloved Bosphorus in the summer. He loved writing fiction stories and novels. He is the author of four different books; when he was terminally ill he finished the final one. He wrote about a travelling hermit ending up in Las Vegas, cats invading an Egyptian shrine, and a student being haunted by his roommate’s laundry or a date going bad. His plots made us see how travellers encounter the miraculous and the mundane from the past and the present. He threw parties at his home. As a loyal donor of ARIT, he bought bulk tickets at the annual fundraising events and hosted his students and friends. We will never forget his knowledge of the side and back streets of Istanbul, Cappadocia and Jerusalem – better than the locals – the interesting friends he made there, his subtle word games and his unique intellectual pranks. He was an important academic and researcher who changed our perspective on the cultural framework of Byzantium in Turkey and around the world. Αναπαύσου εν ειρήνη/İşiklarda uyusun.

**Assoc. Prof. Suna Çağaptay
Dr Ayşe Belgin-Henry**





Metin Münir 1944 – 2023

by Mina Toksöz

Metin Münir, a prominent Turkish Cypriot investigative journalist died at the age of 79 after suffering a major heart failure. He has been described by his colleagues as fearless investigative reporter who sought to raise the standard of journalism in Turkey. Graduate of Ankara University's Faculty of Political Sciences, Metin Münir wrote for many national and international newspapers including as Turkey correspondent for *Financial Times*, and the BBC. As editorial director of *Güneş*, he created a unique Turkish broadsheet inspired by his association with *The Independent* newspaper. He also worked for major Turkish papers including *Hürriyet*, *Turkish Daily News*, *Sabah*, *Vatan*, and *Yeni Yüzyıl*. But his columnist position with *Milliyet* ended acrimoniously in 2012 for his refusal to accept the increased censorship imposed on Turkish journalism in recent years.

After moving to Cyprus to his house in Özanköy near Girne (Kyrenia) he continued to publish on the *T24* news site and the Turkish Cypriot paper *Diyalog*. In one of his late correspondences, in response to a suggestion that he should publish his writings in a book, he said he thought no publisher would want to take such a risk. But he also added in an essay, titled 'Sürgün' (Exile, *Diyalog*, 20 May, 2023) that: he was now 'very far' from those previous writings just as the places are all very different to how he used to know them; he then goes on to say that although he is surprised at the extent and depth of the changes surrounding his life, one must accept that everything always changes and accept that we are always 'in exile' from the places and times of before.



Subscription Reminder

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 March 2024 or earlier.

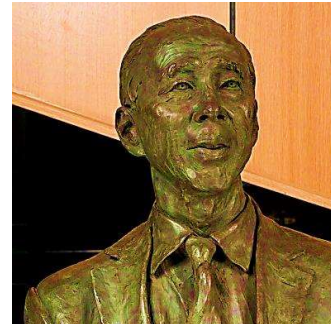


The venue for BATAS' Annual John Martin Lecture

Friday 17 November 2022, 6.00 to 7.30 pm
Alumni Theatre, Cheng Kin Ku Building,
London School of Economics



+



The British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES) has announced its next annual conference which will be at Lancaster University, 1-3 July 2024. This marks the **50th anniversary** of BRISMES which held its first conference in Lancaster University in 1974. (conference@brismes.org)

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