

inter

The compilation of featured articles on INSAMER English

Biannual Journal (2021/1)

Notional



TURKEY: DIASPORA'S SAFE HAVEN

PALESTINIAN
DIASPORA
IN TURKEY

THE NORTH
CAUCASIAN DIASPORA
IN TURKEY

IS THERE A BALKAN
BALKAN DIASPORA
IN TURKEY

The Farce of "Free Speech"

Both of them were French,
and brutally murdered at a
fairly young age.

An over vlew of Post- Independence **Turkey-India Relations**

Contemporary Indo-Turkish ties can be
divided into two phases.

Forgotten Exclaves of Azerbaijan

Exclave areas in these regions can also
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EDITORIAL

We are glad to present the fourth issue of InterNotional. This time we have chosen diaspora for this issue's cover story. As generally accepted phenomena that Turkey is in the middle of migration routes from East to West and South to North. Besides historical minority communities such as Bosniacs, Afro-Turks, a considerable number of new emerging communities are getting to be part of Turkish society nowadays. Turkey is being a new safe haven for immigrants that taking risky journeys due to their dire situations in their homeland. The movement of immigration and refugees not only from the Balkans but also from Caucasasia, Middle East, Asia, and Africa region have been making Turkey a new migration hub. In order to shed new light on the topic, INSAMER researchers have examined various diaspora cases in this issue. There are also articles touching other developments in international affairs; the process of "normalization" with Israel in the Middle East, ongoing Syria crisis, armed conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and reactions to Islamophobic expressions heard in Europe are amongst the other topics you will find out in this issue.

Wish you pleasant reading...

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Contents

Cover Story

Turkey: Diaspora's Safe Haven

- | | | | |
|------|----|--|-----------------------------|
| page | 8 | Palestinian Diaspora in Turkey | Kadriye
SINMAZ |
| page | 18 | The North Caucasian Diaspora in Turkey | Mokhmad
AKHIYADOV |
| page | 24 | Is there a Balkan Diaspora in Turkey? | Emin
EMİN |

Articles

- | | | | |
|------|----|--|--------------------------|
| page | 30 | The Farce of "Free Speech" | Rifat AUDEH |
| page | 34 | Charlie Hebdo's Caricatures of Prophet Muhammad; Do Muslims Devalue Freedom of Speech? | Rabiul
ISLAM |
| page | 38 | Forgotten Exclaves of Azerbaijan | Burak
ÇALIŞKAN |

page	42	The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh: What we know about its geopolitics?	Burak ÇALIŞKAN Mesut ÖZCAN
page	46	Normalizing the Abnormal: Pseudo- Normalization between Sudan and Israel	Dr. Serhat ORAKÇI
page	50	Final Step of Israeli Occupation: West Bank Annexation	Neva KAYA
page	54	Political Interests in Syrian Humanitarian Aid	Kenda SHAHHERHAWASLI
page	58	Caesar Act's Impact on the Syrian Economy	Kenda SHAHHERHAWASLI
page	64	Operation Claw and the Future of Turkey-Iraq Relations	Soner DOĞAN
page	68	George Floyd Protests' Anatomy: Turmoil in America, Impact in Europe, Victory in Europe	Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mehmet ÖZKAN
page	72	An over view of Post-Independence Turkey-India Relations	Dr. Seraj AHSAN
page	76	Hindu Nationalism: A Rise of New Religious Radicalism in India	Rabiul ISLAM
page	86	Has Microfinance Succeed to Function as an Effective Tool to Fight Poverty?	Sueda Nur ÇOKADAR



JANUARY FEBRUARY MARCH APRIL MAY JUNE JULY
AUGUST SEPTEMBER OCTOBER NOVEMBER DECEMBER

ISLAMIC WORLD IN 2020

(JULY-DECEMBER)

The number of confirmed cases of **Coronavirus** exceeds 70 million world-wide.



Joe Biden secures victory against Donald Trump in the US' historic election and becomes 46th president of the United States.

Protest movement of **BlackLivesMatter** kicks off against systemic racism in the US after the death of **George Floyd** under police custody.



A peace deal signed between **Azerbaijan** and **Armenia** ending military conflict continued six weeks of armed conflict.



Muslims across the world condemned **Emmanuel Macron** over his mistreatment of Islam and world-wide call spreads for boycotting French industrial products.

Sudan becomes third country signing **Abraham Accord** recognizing Israel aftermaths of **UAE** and **Bahrain**.



A massive explosion at **the Beirut** port left at least **190 people death** and **thousands injured**.

JANUARY FEBRUARY MARCH APRIL MAY JUNE JULY
AUGUST SEPTEMBER OCTOBER NOVEMBER DECEMBER

TURKEY IN 2020

(JULY-DECEMBER)



A magnitude 6.6 earthquake hits Turkey's **İzmir**, killing more than 110 people.

Erdogan calls French President **Macron**'s "**brain-dead**" over his NATO remarks.





Turkey's FM **Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu** pays working visit to Mali, Senegal and Guinea-Bissau in **West Africa**.

Erdogan announced Turkey's discovery of **320 billion** cubic meters **natural gas** in the **Black Sea**.



Turkey and **Libya** strengthens military and security cooperation.

Ayasofya (Hagia Sofia) turns into mosque again after **86 years** of museum status.



PALESTINIAN DIASPORA IN TURKEY

KADRIYE SINMAZ

The Arab-Israeli war that took place in 1948 was the beginning of many crises. The first major migration occurred after this very war. Approximately one million Palestinian civilians had to immigrate to the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan to protect themselves from the attacks by Zionist Jews.¹ The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), founded in 1949 and started its activities in 1950, provides assistance to Palestinian refugees in these five regions, with a population of approximately six million, in the fields of education, health, infrastructure and social services. When the issue of “Palestinian refugees” comes up, UNRWA’s field of activity usually comes to mind. But in the 72-year history of occupation, Palestinians have dispersed to many countries around the world.

Turkey also hosts between 25,000 and 30,000 Palestinians from different regions.² The first Palestinian migration to Turkey

dates back to the 1970s. Until the 2000s, the number of Palestinians who came to Turkey had been small. This is because Turkey’s past economic and internal political problems had stirred off migrants from viewing the country as a refuge.

After 2010, the Arab Spring and the unstable administrations in the Middle East made Turkey to be seen as a security blanket. Turkey is host to many migrants not only from Syria but also from different countries in the Middle East. After 2010, Palestinians from different Middle Eastern countries also came to Turkey.

The legal status and living conditions of Palestinians living in Turkey vary; depending on the countries and history from which they come. In this

article, Palestinians living in Turkey will be categorized into six groups. This article is based on face-to-face interviews with Palestinian refugees from different regions.

Palestinian Diaspora In Turkey	Total Number of Families	Date of Coming to Turkey	Reasons for Coming to Turkey
First Generation from Palestine	500	Before 2000	Education
Palestinians from Iraq	250	After 2010	War
Palestinians from different countries after Arab Spring	1.000	After 2011	Instability
Palestinians from Syria	3.500	After 2013	War
Palestinians from the Gulf	400	After 2018	Economic and political pressure
Students from Palestine	8.000 (person)		Education

1. First Generation

Palestinians who came to Turkey for education before 2000 and then settled in the country are usually known as the “first generation”. A Palestinian man would usually come to Turkey to study in medical or engineering departments. He would later settle in Turkey by marrying a Turkish or Palestinian woman. Many of the first generation have become Turkish citizens, and their children are also born in Turkey. It is estimated that there are 500 families of the first generation living in Turkey for the last 20–25 years. An average Palestinian family usually consists of five people. Therefore, it can be said that around 2,500 Palestinians live in Turkey from the first generation. Socio-economically, people of this group usually work as a doctor, engineer or merchant, the same as that of an average Turkish citizen.

Vail Salmanali, who came from Gaza to Turkey in 1994 when he was 18, says that the first generation came to Turkey because previously there were no medical and engineering departments in schools in Arab countries, or because very few people were admitted to these departments. Salmanali studied engineering in Turkey. He came from Gaza, a region under multifaceted pressure with a provisional scrip issued by Israel. He was not able to visit Gaza until he finished his undergraduate, master’s and doctoral studies. He was finally able to visit Gaza for the first time in 2010, 16 years after arriving in Turkey.

Salmanali says that the biggest problem for the first generation is not being able to visit their homeland, and he blames Israel’s policy for pressuring young Palestinian people from visiting their country. According to Salmanali, Palestinian youth – especially those from Gaza – who receive education in Turkey were usually arrested by Israeli forces on their way out of their

country and forced to inform about the Palestinian diaspora in Turkey. Otherwise, it would not be possible for them to return to Turkey and continue their education. He says that he refrained from visiting Gaza to avoid Israeli forces mistreatment and to complete his education.

Salmanali says he benefited from Turkey’s free healthcare because he came as a student to the country. But he remembered that at that time, university education in Turkey came with a cost, and all foreign students paid three times as much as Turkish students. But after becoming a Turkish citizen in 2016, he had no health and education fee problems.

Unlike other Palestinians living in Turkey, Salmanali does not describe himself primarily as a “Palestinian.” First, he says, he is a “Turkish” or “Turkish citizen”, and then he is originally a Palestinian. Although he is occasionally subjected to racism when he says he is an Arab, he says their perspective changes positively when he says he is a Palestinian.

Salmanali says that the first generation consists of people who have important professions and make significant contribution to Turkey. He underlines the need for the convenience in obtaining work permit and conferring citizenship to these people.³

2. Palestinians from Iraq

Iraq is one of the countries where Palestinians immigrate due to Israeli threats and attacks. Palestinians living in Iraq were registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) under the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. According to official figures, 23,000 Palestinians lived in Iraq before the US invasion.⁴





After the US invasion in Iraq in 2003, many Palestinians were displaced for the second time and forced to leave the country. They usually went to nearby countries such as Syria, Jordan, and TRNC (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus). During this period, the number of immigrants who came to Turkey was small, as Turkey had intricate rules in accepting refugees. Some of the Palestinians who were forced to leave Iraq were resettled by UNHCR in a third country, such as Switzerland, Germany, Canada, Australia; some of them began living as irregular migrants in Syria and surrounding countries, usually undocumented.

After 2010, some Palestinians from Iraq were displaced for the third time due to conflicts – especially the Syrian War – in the Middle East. During this period, many Palestinian immigrants came to Turkey. Palestinians who fled to Turkey from the war in Iraq and displaced for the third time,

applied to UNHCR's offices in Turkey and registered, and most of them were resettled in a third country. Although most migrants use Turkey as a country of transit, it is known that between 250 and 300 families of Palestinian origin from Iraq currently live in Turkey.⁵

Among the Palestinian groups living in Turkey, those living under the most difficult conditions are families from Iraq. Files related to official transactions are transferred from UNHCR to the Republic of Turkey's Ministry of Interior Directorate General of Migration Management. Difficulty in obtaining work permit has forced them to work illegally. This, in turn, caused labour exploitation. On the other hand, although children and the elderly do benefit from limited healthcare services, there are still problems in this issue. Around four million Palestinian migrants of Iraqi origin in Turkey who cannot meet their needs for registration cannot receive

regular assistances. Some families live in very difficult conditions and depend on the help of relatives living in other countries.⁶

3. Palestinians from Different Countries After the Arab Spring

After The Jasmine Revolution, which began in Tunisia in 2010, anti-government demonstrations began in many countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Bahrain. Demands for freedom and justice, which soon spread to the Middle East, was put to a stop by pressure from authoritarian administrations in many countries. There have been extremes of repression, be it in the form of a military coup in Egypt or a war in Syria. Almost in every country, opposition groups have faced different dimensions of dictatorial regimes, and instability has prevailed in these countries. Many people have gone to different countries for reasons such as security threats as well as failure to meet economic and political expectations. It is estimated that about 1,000 Palestinian families came to Turkey from different countries in the Middle East during this period.⁷

These Palestinian families that came to Turkey on a travel visa or residence permit have come in the hope to return. Due to the ongoing crises and unstable political structure in many countries, they have not been able to return. Many of them continue to live in Turkey by establishing their own businesses or working in different jobs.

4. Palestinians from Syria

One of the biggest results of the Syrian War is the displacement of more than 13 million people living in the country. Palestinian refugees in Syria, whose number was

496,000 in 2011, have also been affected by this crisis.⁸ According to UNRWA, at least 124,000 Palestinians have been forced to migrate from Syria to Lebanon, Jordan or more remote areas in the nine-year period.⁹ Turkey is also one of the countries where Palestinian refugees have gone to since the beginning of the Syrian War.

The number of Syrian Palestinians arriving in Turkey has increased, especially after Bashar al-Assad's forces bombed the Yarmuk Camp in December 2012 and forced 210,000 people living in the camp to immigrate. It is estimated that 3,500 Palestinian families in Turkey came from Syria.¹⁰

Since Palestinians living in Syria are stateless, they tried to enter Turkey illegally until 2015, and there were problems in terms of their registration. Since the "travel document" issued by the Syrian state in pre-war period had no legal equivalent in Turkey, Palestinians from Syria were not officially recognized. So until 2015, it was very difficult for Palestinians to enter Turkey from Syria. Those who could enter could not benefit from any services such as healthcare or education.¹¹ Following the arrangement in 2015, Palestinians who came from Syria to Turkey began to be treated as Syrians and were granted temporary protection.

Palestinians from Syria, the most populous Palestinian group in Turkey, are divided into five groups according to their legal status:¹²

1. Tourist visa holders: People who enter Turkey through official channels from border crossings, official ports and airports.
2. Refugees with work permits: Those who invest in Turkey through property purchase or work in different institutions in Turkey.



3. Refugees with humanitarian residence: It is a type of residence that gives the right of protection to the people who find asylum in other countries for the reasons specified in the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Turkey is signatory to the convention.
4. “ID card” (*kimlik*): It is the group of people that holds temporary protection card and makes up the vast majority. The Turkish government granted many Palestinians from Syria with the same status as Syrians after the 2015 arrangement. They benefit from free education and healthcare services and have work permits. But they have to stay in the city where the “ID card” is given; they have to have permission from the police to move between cities.
5. There is a group of a small number of people, the majority of whom live in Istanbul, who do not have any legal documents. This group is divided into two within itself:
 - a. Although they are registered in different cities, they are those who come to Istanbul to work or live with relatives. On July 22, 2019, the governorship of Istanbul gave the refugees living in Istanbul one-month period to leave the city, although they were registered in different provinces.¹³ According to the decision, refugees captured in different provinces were sent or deported to the provinces where they are registered.¹⁴
 - b. People who are caught trying to enter or exit Turkey illegally. These people who are not given ID cards must go to the police once every 15 days or every month. Immigrants in these two groups cannot obtain ID cards because they enter Turkey illegally and cannot enjoy the rights of refugees in areas such as healthcare and education. They also face the risk of deportation to Syria, where the war is ongoing.

Ibrahim Al-Ali, who went from Syria to Lebanon at the end of 2012 and from Lebanon to Turkey in 2017, divides his life



into two parts, before and after 2013. Al-Ali, whose family came to Syria in 1948 and lived in the Yarmuk Camp, explains that before the Syrian War they had the same rights as any Syrian, except for right to elect and be elected. In December 2012, when Bashar al-Assad's forces began bombing the camp, a second period began for all the camp residents and it was as if a new Nakba happened to them. Al-Ali points out that refugees in Lebanon live in very difficult conditions. He believes that the biggest problem in Turkey is the difficulties in official transactions. Al-Ali, who lives in Turkey on a tourist visa, says he must renew his visa every year, and some people at the Syrian Consulate accept bribe of hundreds of dollars each time. He says that despite the difficulty of official transactions, the attitude of the Turks to the Palestinians is quite intimate and it is his wish to continue living in Turkey.¹⁵

5. Palestinians from the Gulf

After 2017, the US-backed political alliance between Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and UAE's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed has supported many authoritarian administrations in crises in the Middle East, from Egypt to Yemen. The UAE and Bahrain have moved into a period of normalisation in their clandestine relations with Israel. Saudi Arabia is also expected to sign a peace agreement with Israel soon.

The change of policy on the Palestinian-Israeli issue directly affects Palestinians

living in some Gulf countries. There are 429,000 Palestinians in Saudi Arabia and 101,000 in the UAE.¹⁶ Palestinians who live there do not have refugee status, because these countries have not signed the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. These countries do not have international obligations regarding immigrants, and they place bureaucratic barriers that hamper immigrants from easily obtaining their visas.¹⁷ New economic burdens associated with residence renewal and work permits have left Palestinians in a difficult position. In addition to economic pressure, the Palestinians are also faced with political pressure.

In 2018, Saudi Arabia arrested 68 Jordanian and Palestinian citizens on vague grounds. Among the detainees was 82 year-old cancer patient Mohammed al-Khudari, former representative of Hamas to Saudi Arabia.¹⁸ After two years of detention, the defendants began their trial at the special terrorism court.¹⁹ Crown Prince MbS, known for his crackdown

on opponents in the country, is also trying to neutralize Palestinians who oppose cooperation with Israel.

It is estimated that 400 families of Palestinian origin from Saudi Arabia and the UAE have come to Turkey by economic and political grounds since 2018.²⁰ Mohammad Ghazal came to Turkey with his family for the same reasons in the beginning of 2019. Ghazal's decision to leave Saudi Arabia was because he felt a security threat due to his anti-Israel stance.

It is estimated that 400 families of Palestinian origin from Saudi Arabia and the UAE have come to Turkey by economic and political grounds since 2018.



Ghazal, who is a lecturer in geological engineering, expresses that although he has sufficient financial resources, he still wants to work according to his profession. But his inability to speak Turkish is the biggest obstacle to his work. Ghazal says that the biggest problem for Palestinians living in Turkey is related to work opportunity. And in this case, he points out that the principles of employing foreign workers in Turkey are an important factor.²¹

6. Students from Palestine

Approximate 8,000 Palestinian students from Palestine and different countries are educated in Turkey. 500 of them benefit from the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) scholarships. While students who benefit from the YTB scholarship receive free healthcare services, this remains a major problem for many students.

Like many international students in Turkey, Palestinian students' problem is language barrier. 5,000 Palestinian students in Turkey study English programs at private universities.

Palestinian students, spread in 55 cities of Turkey, often live in a closed social circle among themselves in large cities such as Istanbul. But in small cities where there are only a few Palestinians, they develop more intense social relations with the Turks.²²

Conclusion

The Palestinian diaspora in Turkey differs according to the countries they come

from, and Turkey has become the third or fourth country in which they live. Some Palestinians come to Turkey through legal channels and live here with tourist visas, residence or work permits, while others – especially those who have fled the war – come through illegal channels. While there were 508 irregular migrants of Palestinian origin who entered Turkey in 2014, this number increased to 12,210 in 2019.²³

Health, education and work sectors are their main problems. Although Palestinian families from Syria can receive partially free health treatment and medication, a significant part of migrants have to pay high fees. While the children of refugee families who have been living in Turkey for many years do speak Turkish, new immigrants have problems in their education due to language differences. And they are forced to opt for private schools. Their inability to speak Turkish is also a major obstacle in finding a job. Immigrants

who have work permits also have difficulty finding work due to principles of employing foreign workers. In addition, some employers hire these immigrants illegally for the sake of cheap labor. Cheap labor is made of immigrants without work permits or illegal immigrants. It is known that illegal workers are employed at very low wages in many regions of Turkey, especially on the Turkish border and Istanbul.

Despite other problems, almost all of the Palestinians interviewed state that they are not exposed to racism in Turkey. They point out that some Turks do have a negative attitude, thinking that they are “Arabs” or “Syrians”, but when they say,

It is known that illegal workers are employed at very low wages in many regions of Turkey, especially on the Turkish border and Istanbul.



“I am Palestinian”, the Turks shifted their attitude. It is understood that the concept of “Arab” – given the established historical narrative in Turkey – and “Syrian” – due to the fact that Turkey has become the most important agenda with the rapidly growing numbers of Syrian migrants – evoke racism in some Turkish citizens. As Turkish politicians and people have supported the Palestinians since the 1960s, Turkey has grown a positive view of the Palestinians.

The Palestinian issue has become a unique issue in which different political parties in Turkey share a common ground. However, there is a misunderstanding in Turkey that the Palestinians living in the country negatively affect humanitarian relations between the two peoples. As a result of Zionist propaganda, there is a widespread perception in Turkey that Palestinians sold their land to the Jews; when in fact, before 1948, the British Mandate regime

sold public lands while some Lebanese and Syrian landlords sold their lands in Palestine to Jews. During this period, less than 1% of the land sold by the Palestinians. After 1948, Israel occupied most of the historic Palestinian Territories.²⁴

Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who live in different countries and never see their country feel a sense of belonging to their land. Almost all Palestinians living in Turkey identify themselves as “Palestinian” and want to return to Palestine one day. But they are happy to live in Turkey until their return is possible. The most basic demands are in the convenience in terms of healthcare services, education, business, and other official transactions. Turkey has a great responsibility because it has a large migrant population. But should a stable policy be developed, Palestinian youth and qualified human resources would make a significant contribution to Turkey.



End Notes

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- ⁴ From the interview with Tamir Misheynish on September 12, 2020.
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- ⁶ From the interview with Mohammad Misheynish, President of the Palestinian Solidarity Association on August 27, 2020.
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- ²⁰ From the interview with Mohammad Misheynish, President of the Palestinian Solidarity Association on August 27, 2020.
- ²¹ From the interview with Mohammad Ghazal on September 1, 2020.
- ²² From the interview with Yasser Alashi, President Of The Palestine Students Association, on September 1, 2020.
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INFOGRAPHICS

www.insamer.com/en

PATANI MUSLIMS



Patani is a region in southern Thailand close to Malaysia's northern border.

MUSLIM MALAYS make up

80%

of the region, which historically belongs to the **MALAY GEOGRAPHY**.



Today, the number of **Muslims** in Thailand is **5 MILLION**.

Approximately **10 THOUSAND** people have **lost their lives** and many more have been injured in the violence against Muslims since **2004**.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE OF THE PATANI CONFLICT:

9TH CENTURY

The people in Patani converted to Islam



1457

Islam became the official religion of the country when the Patani King converted to Islam.



1785

The region was occupied by the British Empire.

POST 1909

Assimilation and violence policies of the Buddhist administration against Muslims.

WW2

Short-term Japanese rule



1909

The Anglo-Siam treaty gave the region to Thailand.

1960'S-1986

Armed struggle of Patani Muslims

2005-2006

Peace negotiations started under the pressure of ASEAN but remained inconclusive due to the military coup in Thailand

2004

Increasing violence against Muslims and resumption of armed struggle

2013-2016

Unofficial peace negotiations with Malaysia's initiatives



THE DEMANDS OF THE MUSLIM OPPOSITION:

- 1- Establishing a serious dialogue between the **Thai Government** and the **Patani Muslims** to reach a solution.
- 2- Malaysia to continue its **role as a mediator**.
- 3- Granting the freedom of **language, religion and culture** of the **Patani people**, besides giving them the priority to be in the administration of the region.

- 4- Removing the extraordinary situation in the region, and the obstacles to investments and supporting them **economically**.
- 5- Thai government to **invest** in this region for its economic development and end its **backwardness**.

- 6- Facilitating the **development** and **humanitarian aid work** of **international development agencies** and charities in the region.
- 7- The release of **political prisoners**.



THE NORTH CAUCASIAN DIASPORA IN TURKEY

MOKHMAD AKHIYADOV

The migration from the North Caucasus to the Ottoman Empire, which began in the mid 19th century and continued until the early 20th century, is undoubtedly one of the vital factors determining the social structure of the Turkish Republic today. At the same time, the Ottoman Empire and Turkey's social structure has left a significant mark on the North Caucasian diaspora. Therefore, there is a mutual interaction between the two phenomena in question.

Most of the North Caucasian diaspora, which continues its presence in many countries, is located in Turkey. However, it is difficult to determine the exact number of North Caucasians in Turkey; various sources suggest the numbers vary between one and seven million. The most accepted number is 3–4 million.

North Caucasian diaspora in Turkey began to emerge in the second half of the 19th century when the region suffered occupation by the Russian Empire, who launched a mass forced migration of Caucasians to the Ottoman Empire. The migration of the peoples of the North Caucasus to the Ottoman Empire can be divided into three periods. The first and largest wave of immigration corresponds to the immigration of the Adyghe–Abkhazian ethnic groups living in the western North Caucasus between 1859 and 1866 when the Caucasian War ended. This wave of migration was called the

“Great Deportation”. The second wave, different from the first, is the migration experienced within the Ottoman Empire after the Russo–Turkish War in 1877–1878. When the Ottomans lost their lands in the Balkans in the 1870s, they moved the North Caucasians, which had previously settled in this region, to various regions of the empire, especially Palestine, Syria, and Anatolia. The last mass migration took place in 1919–1928 when the Soviet rule was established in the Caucasus.¹

It is almost impossible to determine exactly how many people came to the Ottoman Empire borders when the Caucasian migrations started in the 1850s, gained momentum during the Crimean War, and reached its peak in 1864. The most important reason for this is that there are no sources showing the number of immigrants who can be verified.² Although there are no exact numbers on this subject, the number of North Caucasians who had to leave their homeland as a result of Russian expansion

and immigrated to Ottoman lands in the period from the middle of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century is approximately 1.5 million.³

The migration, which continued for various reasons from the 1850s to the 1950s, resulted in the settlement of millions of immigrants to various parts of the Ottoman Empire. The population of Rumelia – along the Black Sea coast – mostly exiled by ships to Anatolian lands known as the “Circassian line”, where a large Caucasian population lives today. This line starts from Sinop-Samsun and extends to Çorum, Tokat, Sivas, Kayseri (especially Uzunyayla region), Maraş, Adana, and Hatay respectively. Today, there are many villages of various Caucasian peoples in South and East Marmara.⁴ However, Caucasian peoples did not only settle in Anatolia but also in other parts of the Ottoman Empire such as the Balkans, Syria, Jordan and Egypt.

It should be noted that the Ottoman State subjected its immigrants from the Caucasus to a planned settlement policy and that this policy cannot be read separately from the empire’s domestic policy and geopolitical struggle that continued on its lands. In this context, a significant number of Caucasians were settled in Ottoman provinces adjacent to or not far from the Balkan and Caucasian regions, where the borders between the Ottoman and Russian empires crossed. Thus, the Ottoman administration tried to keep the Caucasus peoples, who had a solid experience of war and also a sense of historical revenge against Russia, from a possible war with it.⁵ This was a matter of concern to the Ottoman foreign policy. Apart from that, another factor affecting the settlement policy of the Ottomans towards the Caucasian peoples is directly related to the social structure of the country. The Caucasians were subjected to a planned settlement policy with the idea that ethnic groups and religious minorities within the Ottoman State might rebel.⁶ And by the

1880s, the settlement geography of the Caucasians in the Ottoman Empire began to take its final shape and concentrated mainly in four regions of the country: Western Anatolia (particularly Northwest Anatolia), Central Anatolia (Circassian line), Eastern Anatolia, and Arab provinces (Syria, Palestine, and Jordan).

The dispersal of the Caucasian diaspora in various nation-states left great marks on them. However, the diaspora has been exposed to different developments depending on the country in which it is located. For example, while the North Caucasian peoples living in Jordan have various privileges as the founding people of the state, the diaspora in Turkey has been assimilated as a result of the Turkification policy in the early years of the republic.

The institutionalization of the Caucasian diaspora in Turkey is equivalent to that in the first quarter of the 20th century. This situation undoubtedly depends directly on the developments in the Ottoman Empire. As a result of the Young Turk Revolution in 1908 when a constitutional monarchy emerged as an alternative to absolute monarchy and the formation of some democratic political institutions in the Ottoman, the position of the North Caucasus diaspora began to strengthen. As a matter of fact, the years of the Committee of Union and Progress (1908-1918) are described as the “golden age of Caucasians in the Ottoman Empire”⁷ by the North Caucasian diaspora.

Behind the emergence of such a positive environment for the North Caucasus diaspora, lies the socio-political change in the Ottoman Empire at that time, as well as the developments in the country’s foreign policy. This is directly related to the Pan-Turkism doctrine, which was followed by the Young Turk administration and aimed to unite all Turkic peoples under the leadership of Istanbul, all of which had suffered the occupation of the Russian



Empire. Knowing that it was not possible to unite Anatolian and Central Asian Turks without including the Caucasus, the Ottoman administration was also aware of the importance of the North Caucasus diaspora in terms of its foreign policy.⁸

In 1908, when a positive socio-political environment emerged for the North Caucasus diaspora, the Society for Circassian Unity and Mutual Aid was established, which united the leading representatives of the Caucasian diaspora think tanks. Although the association had no official political aims, it set an important example for the various political institutions to be established by the North Caucasus diaspora in the future. However, with the 1923 Lausanne Treaty, all the societies established by the Caucasian diaspora were closed because the definition of “minority” was established on the basis of religion, and Muslim groups were not counted as minorities.⁹

Refugees from the North Caucasus who moved to Turkey in the 1920s had some differences in terms of identity protection and political activity from their compatriots who immigrated in earlier periods. The most important difference between them was that when immigrants who settled in the Ottoman Empire in the second half of the 19th century became part of the Turkish society, the immigrants of the 20th century perceived Turkey as a temporary refuge. Because most of the 1920 immigrants were politically active people who fought against the Soviet regime and were continuing their struggle

abroad with the desire to return to their homeland – the North Caucasus – after the collapse of the communist regime. Because of this approach, they made great efforts not to lose their ethnic identity and not to be assimilated into Turkish society.¹⁰

However, it should be noted that the USSR victory in the Second World War greatly disappointed North Caucasus immigration. After this date, their struggle to protect their identity began to fade and their process of integration into the Turkish society began.

Although between 1923–1945 the authorities of the Turkish Republic continued to actively use the Caucasian factor in its foreign policy, the Caucasian diaspora viewed this period as a “period of silence”. On the other hand, Turkey’s democratization process after WW II and during the 1950s has affected the Caucasian diaspora in a positive way. It should also be noted that, along with Turkey’s domestic policy, positive shifts in the

country’s foreign policy during this period were also important for the Caucasian diaspora. As a result of this policy, the North Caucasians and Azerbaijanis established the Society of the Hand of Friendship in 1946, which had an important place in Turkey’s history.

With the second wave of Soviet immigrants after WW II, the representatives of the North Caucasus, who preferred Turkey as a refuge, began to give preference to countries in Western Europe and the United States. On the other hand, in the 1960s and 1970s, North Caucasian emigrants in Turkey

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began to withdraw from the political scene for many years. Meanwhile, the young generation of North Caucasian immigrants began to participate in the debate between the left and the right that erupted in Turkey; over time, they became more concerned with Turkey's internal problems than the North Caucasus.

Since the mid 20th century, the migration from the countryside to the cities in Turkey has played an important role in the development of diaspora consciousness among the North Caucasian diaspora. In this process, the associations established by the diaspora in big cities are of primary importance. Although after the coup on September 12, 1980, the activities

of Caucasian diaspora associations were stopped like every other association in the country. Henceforth, by the end of the 1980s, the North Caucasians in Turkey took the final form of the diaspora and literally ceased to be an immigrant.

With the collapse of the USSR in the early 1990s, Turkey had a chance to leave the Moscow-based policy and develop a direct relationship with newly emerged states. During this period, the North Caucasian diaspora began to take an active part in Turkey's regional policy. Moreover, the developments in the North Caucasus region, especially the Georgian-Abkhaz and Chechen-Russian wars in the early 1990s have played a unifying role for the



Caucasian diaspora in Turkey. Since this period, there was a rapid increase in the NGOs established by the diaspora.

Although today the diasporization of the North Caucasians in Turkey has been completed, it is very difficult to say that they acted in the alliance. Some North Caucasian diaspora established NGOs clearly reflect the views that stand as a major obstacle to acting in unity. In this context, the main cause of the greatest separation is the two approaches that developed in the diaspora regarding “ethnic identity identification”. The first approach tries to gather all ethnic groups within the North Caucasian diaspora under one identity (Caucasian). The second approach views that there is no single Caucasian identity and therefore they are separated by each national identity such as Chechen, Circassian, Ossetian etc. There were heated debates between these two approaches, and as a result, two concepts with a negative connotation emerged: “macron” (macro nationalist) and “micron” (micro nationalist).¹¹

It should also be noted that although this micro-macro distinction is relatively new, it has a long history. In fact, this separation is slightly associated with the left-right debate in Turkey and even with the millet system of the Ottoman Empire. In this context, for a long time in the Ottoman Empire, and subsequently in the Turkish Republic, the identification of all ethnic groups of the North Caucasus under

the common ethnic name “Circassians” was and is the dominant trend. Some members of the North Caucasian diaspora, who were against this approach, joined Turkey’s leftist movement because they saw it as the only way out to preserve their ethnic identity. Due to their leftist views, this part of the Caucasian diaspora saw the Soviet Caucasus as “paradise” and always dreamed of returning there. Hence, this group has come to be defined as “Returners”. Those

affected by the Turkish “right” from the North Caucasus diaspora were generally referred to as “Unifiers” because the idea of the United Caucasus was dominant. As a result, when it came to the beginning of the 2000s, the concepts of “macron” in return of “Unifiers” and “micron” in return for “Returners” began to be used by the North Caucasian diaspora.

It also appears that this distinction is clearly reflected in the NGOs established by the North Caucasian diaspora. Although most of the NGOs claim to represent all ethnic groups in the Caucasus diaspora in Turkey it is not so in practice. For example, the Federation of Caucasian Associations (KAFFED), which was established in 2003, is known as an NGO dominated by Circassians

(Adyghe), although it gathered more than 50 associations under one roof. In contrast, the Federation of United Caucasus Associations established in 2004 and the Federation of Circassian Associations that emerged in 2013 are known for defending the idea of unity of all the peoples of the

There has been a process of liberalization in policy towards ethnic minorities in Turkey. This has opened up certain opportunities to stop the assimilation of the Caucasian diaspora.

North Caucasus. With the establishment of the Federation of Abkhazian Associations in 2010, the Abkhaz-Circassian rupture occurred within the North Caucasus diaspora. Thus, “micro nationalism”, which is common in some segments of the diaspora, prevents it from acting in unity.

Recently, there has been a process of liberalization in policy towards ethnic minorities in Turkey. This has opened up certain opportunities to stop the assimilation of the Caucasian diaspora in the country. As a matter of fact, the diaspora

should be aware that there has been a significant increase in the efforts to protect their languages and cultures. These changes in Turkey affected not only the cultural sphere in the diaspora but also began to give positive results in the political space. The Pluralist Democracy Party, founded in 2014, is a good example. However, despite the positive developments in Turkey’s socio-political life, the North Caucasus diaspora has difficulty in eliminating segregation. And apparently, this problem will continue to be seen in the coming years.

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IS THERE A BALKAN DIASPORA IN TURKEY?

EMIN EMIN

After its conquests in the Balkans, the Ottoman Empire implemented a settlement policy in order to change the demographic characteristics of the region and to ensure that those who could rebel against the administration within their own lands became minorities in different geographies of the empire. In this context, Muslim communities who were sent to the Balkans from Anatolian lands - to Turkify/ Islamize the Balkan geography - started to migrate after the 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War. Not only those of Turkish origin migrated from the Balkans to Turkey. People of other nationalities such as Bosnians and Albanians, who have been converted to Islam under the Ottoman rule, also immigrated.

The mass migrations from the Balkans to Turkey can be categorized into three different periods. The first one was in 1877-78 that took place due to the Ottoman-Russian War. The second one took place in 1912-13, during the Balkan Wars, which brought an end to the Ottoman rule in the Balkans. The last one happened after the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923.

The exact number of Balkan people who migrated to Turkey cannot be determined. However, Kemal H. Karpat (2012) stated that Ottoman official statistics, which do not include a large number of people who managed to cross the Ottoman and

Turkish borders illegally, reported that a total of 1.5 million people left the Balkans between 1878-1918.¹ On the other hand, McCharty (2014) claimed that according to the data obtained from different sources, 1,253,500 people became refugees during the Ottoman-Russian War alone.²

The problems emerging in the different periods of post-Ottoman states in the Balkans also influenced the nature of migration to Turkey. When the 1923-2007 Balkans to Turkey migration rate is analyzed, it is seen that more than half of the immigrants came to Turkey before WWII. The main reason for the high immigration number in this period was the population exchange agreement between Turkey and

Greece in 1923. Another reason for the high immigration rate was the migration of the Muslim minorities who had to live in countries such as Bulgaria, Romania, and Yugoslavia and who believed that it would be safer to migrate to Turkey.

The “Free Migration Treaty” between Yugoslavia and Turkey in 1953 gave the right to those who were adopting Turkey ethnically or culturally or to those able to be supported by relatives or families in Turkey to obtain a “free-immigrant” visa.³ As a result, around 180 thousand people in 1950-1969 emigrated from Yugoslavia to Turkey. Henceforth, as well as Turks, a large number of Albanians and Bosnians who spoke Turkish also migrated to Turkey.

prohibited immigration, it started to apply Bulgarization policies on the Turks who remained behind. Those who failed to migrate to Turkey to unite with their families were forced to wait for the “Close Relatives Migration” deal between Bulgaria and Turkey in 1968. The agreement opened the way for Bulgarian citizens of Turkish origin – who have familiar and kinship ties with Bulgarian citizens who had migrated to Turkey until 1952 – to move to Turkey. The last mass immigration from the Balkans to Turkey took place in 1989. This migration only took place when the Bulgarian forced assimilation policy – in which the state changed the names of Turks in Bulgaria between 1985-89 – was met with resistance.⁴ Source: Ahmet İçduygu et.

	Bulgaria	Yugoslavia	Greece	Romania	Others	Total	Percentage
1923-1949	220.085	117.212	394.753	121.339	10.109	863.498	52,2
1950-1959	154.473	138.585	14.787	5	4.222	312.072	18,9
1960-1969	2.582	42.512	2.081	259	1.047	48.481	2,9
1970-1979	113.562	2.940	-----	147	139	116.788	7,1
1980-1989	225.892	2.550	4	686	4.457	233.589	14,1
1990-1999	74.564	2.159	-----	126	773	77.622	4,7
2000-2007	138	1.548	-----	2	49	1.737	0,1
Total	791.296	307.506	411.625	122.564	20.796	1.653.787	100
Percentage	47,8	18,6	24,9	7,4	1,3	100	

Source: Ahmet İçduygu et. al., *Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Göç Politikaları, 1923-2023: Ulus-Devlet Oluşumundan Ulus-Ötesi Dönüşümlere*, İstanbul, Koç Üniversitesi Araştırmaları Merkezi, MiReKoc Araştırma Raporları 1/2014, s. 140-141.

With the change of the Bulgarian government in 1950-51, around 150 thousand people had to emigrate to Turkey. However, after the Bulgarian government decided to stop these migrations towards the end of 1951, tens of thousands of people were separated from their families. In the period when the Bulgarian government

al., *Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Göç Politikaları, 1923-2023: Ulus-Devlet Oluşumundan Ulus-Ötesi Dönüşümlere*, İstanbul, Koç Üniversitesi Araştırmaları Merkezi, MiReKoc Araştırma Raporları 1/2014, s. 140-141.

After 1923, 48% of immigrants who have immigrated to Turkey were from Bulgaria, 24.8% from Greece and 18.6% from





Yugoslavia. After the 1970s in particular, the migration to Turkey from the Balkan countries – except Bulgaria – were severely reduced. The main reason for this is security concerns in migration before the 70's, while economic reasons have affected the migration phenomenon even more after the 70's. That's why immigration from the Balkans to Turkey decreased, while immigration from these countries to the European countries increased during the same period.

As a result of migration from the region to Turkey since the 19th century until today, it's estimated that 20% of Turkey's population is of 'Balkan origin'. This means that close to 20 million people in Turkey are of Balkan origin.⁵

But based on country of origin, it is impossible to determine the number of Bosnians, or Albanians in Turkey. In this context Mrduljaš Saša (2018) in his study calculated the number of Bosnian origin

in Turkey in 2017, based on the 151,504 Bosnians who had migrated to Turkey up to 1921. Saša calculated the population growth in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Turkey in 1921-1991 and in 1991-2017. Based on the population growth in Bosnia-Herzegovina, he claimed that in 2017, at least 768,259 Bosnians lived in Turkey, and based on the population growth in Turkey, 932,253 Bosnians lived in Turkey.⁶ Since this estimate only takes into account the Bosnians who migrated until 1921, it is safe to say that the real number would be much higher. Indeed, different studies in this field calculate that around six million Bosnians live in Turkey, which is more than the number of Bosnians in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Sandzak put together.⁷

On the other hand in a report prepared by the Republic of Albania's Institute of Statistics on the number of Albanians in Turkey shows that more Albanians have migrated to Turkey compared to other countries and that around 1.5 million

Albanians were settled in cities such as Istanbul, Izmir, Bursa, and Ankara as well as in 300 villages of Anatolia. Also, it has been claimed that if the natural increase of Albanians in Turkey is calculated the number should have reached 6.2 million.⁸

It appears that the Balkan origin immigrants and their descendants have deeply assimilated into Turkish society. Balkan immigrants, who have strong relations with the Turks in terms of their shared religion and culture, have become Turks themselves over the years. The use of Bosnian, Albanian, or other native languages has decreased considerably. Perhaps this served as a wake-up call for the Balkan immigrants not to completely erase their history, since they have started to demand the availability of lessons that teach these languages in Turkey. Nowadays, when online education is becoming widespread, such language education could be given as an elective course. These steps, if taken by the Ministry of National Education, would be highly welcomed by the Balkan origins.

Even though the Balkan immigrants have accepted the Turkish identity, they have also established various associations, foundations and federations in order to maintain the bond with those of the same ethnic identity - like Bosnian or Albanian. Civil organizations related to the Balkans started to emerge since the second half of 1940s. In 2008, it's well known that in close to Turkey's 40 provinces, over 2,200 associations related to the Balkans operate.

In addition, there are 12 federations where these associations have established in different cities. Furthermore, there are also associations named as the "Rumeli Businessmen" and "Balkan Businessmen" founded by businessmen of Balkan origin in big cities such as Istanbul, Bursa and Izmir.⁹

Even if Balkan immigrants don't have any political party, they hold critical positions in Turkey's politics. Recently elected president of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey Mustafa Şentop is a member of a Balkan immigrants family. Sabri Demiri, who was recently appointed as Chief Advisor to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is also a Yugoslav immigrant.

Lately, there are allegations that since the start of the 2000s some Albanian people supporting a discourse that they are not Turkish in nationality but they are the people of Turkey. Despite these allegations, the Balkan immigrants are the ones who tend to fulfill their civic duties fully and completely to the Turkish State, and they do not 'create problems' against their current home and nation; on the contrary, they are a group of people that acts with responsibility. There are many Balkan immigrants that show patriotism and sensitivity to Turkey's issues, they don't

see themselves as parasites in Turkey, in fact, they see themselves as the real owners and essential elements of the country.¹⁰

Balkan immigrants in Turkey which are a substantial part of the population and which

There are many Balkan immigrants that show patriotism and sensitivity to Turkey's issues, in fact, they see themselves as the real owners and essential elements of the country.



have a significant influence in business and politics are not trying to achieve the goals of their descendants' country of origin, rather they are trying to contribute to the interests of Turkey in the Balkans.

Question. Does the presence of Balkan immigrants in Turkey prove the existence of a Balkan diaspora?

First, regardless of which ethnic groups they belong to, the Balkan immigrants have put aside their ethnic identity and have accepted the Turkish upper identity. So it is difficult to say that there is a Balkan diaspora in Turkey.

Yet, in spite of this acceptance, the presence of non-governmental organizations that

form the core of their sub-ethnic identity such as Albanian and Bosnian indicates that there is a Balkan diaspora in Turkey. Another reason to believe that there is such diaspora is due to their reaction when there is an attack on their sub-ethnic identities and values.

Finally, the issue of a Balkan diaspora is not an easy one to discuss because the Balkan immigrants don't try to influence the politics of Turkey in line with the objectives of their native countries. On the contrary, they have to serve Turkey's objectives in the Balkans. For this reason, it would be more correct to say that there is a Balkan origin Turkish diaspora within the country.

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INFOGRAPHICS

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THE FARCE OF “FREE SPEECH”

RIFAT AUDEH

Samuel Paty, a teacher, and Ahmed Merabet, a police officer, had a number of things in common. Ahmed was Muslim and Samuel was not. Yet both of them were French, and brutally murdered at a fairly young age. Perhaps more importantly, and tragically, both of them lived in a world full of hypocrisy and hate, whether coming from officials or terrorists.

In 2015, Merabet was the first officer on the scene¹ when armed men attacked the Charlie Hebdo magazine offices, and shot him dead along with 11 other persons. The satirical journal had published offensive cartoons depicting the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad. Paty was killed this October 16th by an 18-year old Muslim refugee with a knife, after Paty had shown some of the cartoons to his students in a class on freedom of expression.

In both cases, the killings were roundly condemned by Muslims in French society and globally, with the Grand Imam of Egypt's Al-Azhar Sheikh Ahmed Al-Tayyeb, one of the most important figures in the Muslim world, calling Paty's killing a “wicked terrorist crime”.² This was preceded by condemnations from Al-Azhar Mosque itself and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation which comprises dozens of Muslim countries. And in both cases, Hebdo's publication of these cartoons has been portrayed as if it is a matter of freedom of speech/expression. This couldn't be farther from the truth.

To reiterate and be clear, Paty was working within his realm in simply attempting to create a debate among his students on this topic, and it is reported that he took the sensitivities of the Muslim students into account as well. His killing was a horrendous and despicable act. Simultaneously, the ongoing attitudes of both Charlie Hebdo staff and French officials can be understood as outright discrimination and xenophobia against Muslims at worst, and blatant double standards and hypocrisy at best.

Clearly, there are restrictions on free speech everywhere, the simplest examples of which are laws relating to defamation and contempt of court. Thus free speech is not absolute. Ironically, Charlie Hebdo itself recognized this when, in 2008, it fired cartoonist Maurice Sinet —some might argue hypocritically— for an allegedly anti-Semitic remark he wrote in a column. (Sinet eventually won a court judgment against his former employer for wrongful termination). The question that poses itself here is why wasn't the argument of freedom of expression employed by the journal in this instance?! Double-standards

are manifested again when considering that Charlie Hebdo was free to publish the offensive cartoons yet France banned all Muslim protests against said cartoons,³ as far back as 2012.

If one needs more proof on the lie, the myth, that is supposedly “free speech” which Macron and other French officials claim

The same however, cannot be said about those who offend, insult or practice hate speech against other denominations, as the Charlie Hebdo case –backed by the French government– has proven to all. So much for “free speech”!

Surely, almost nothing could be more hateful than singling out the most



they are vociferously trying to defend, then look no further than the French Gayssot Act. The Gayssot Act, introduced in 1990, not only criminalizes Holocaust denial, but goes much further. The Act uses the French verb *contester*, which is “to question” or “to dispute” something, and not necessarily deny it. You read that correctly; any dispute, questioning or challenging in public, of the official government narrative surrounding the Holocaust, can land you in prison. Accordingly, the cases of prosecuting those charged with violating the Gayssot Act have had high conviction rates.

important and sacred figure of the religion of close to 2 billion people and depicting that person in a cartoon to terrorism, pornography and other heinous acts. Thus, hate speech is clear here, and although there are texts in French law which –theoretically– criminalize incitement to discrimination, hatred or violence against a person or group belonging to a nation, race or religion, these laws are conveniently ignored in the case of Muslims.

Incredibly, the hypocrisy doesn’t end there. When the two-faced Charlie Hebdo magazine officials decided to republish the

cartoons this September –after firing Sinet as shown above for an allegedly anti-Semitic remark– Macron defended the journal’s decision, adding that it is never his place “to pass judgment on the editorial choice of a journalist or newsroom, never”.⁴ Just a few hours later though, Macron strongly rebuked a journalist⁵ in public, after he published an unflattering story.

In light of all of the above, what conclusions are Muslims supposed to draw? When Macron says that Islam is in crisis⁶, vows to fight what he calls “Islamist separatism”⁷, and claims that “Islamists want to take our future”⁸, the message is no longer against a single terrorist or group of terrorists. Contrast this with the message from Muslim leaders and organizations previously mentioned, denouncing such terrorist attacks and clarifying that Islam is innocent of them and their perpetrators. And when these vulgar, hateful and offensive cartoons, which Macron again vociferously defended at Paty’s tribute, are projected onto governmental buildings in France, for no purpose, this xenophobic, Islamophobic racist message against the entire Muslim

world is only reinforced. To make matters worse, the authorities are cracking down on Islamic NGOs including the Collective Against Islamophobia in France,⁹ described as an “enemy of the Republic”(!) by the French interior minister.

The right of free speech –particularly in the press– in democratic societies, is coupled with responsibilities. This right does not negate ethics and morality, nor should said responsibilities be misinterpreted as an attempt to limit this right. If speech restrictions can be accepted in the law vis-à-vis contempt of court, defamation, national security and reporting on minors, then why not those relating to hateful xenophobic speech towards all, but particularly against minorities?

Yet the attitudes and statements we see from French officials and Charlie Hebdo staff, including the statement by the French Foreign Ministry after calls were made to boycott French products, represent the ongoing arrogant racist mindset which has been carried from France’s atrocity-filled colonial past, and which France has never apologized for.

End Notes

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GLOBAL ANTI-ISLAMIC MANIPULATIONS

Manipulations targeting Islam and Muslims are intensifying. With the generated perspectives, hostility to Islam is **getting more and more dangerous**.

ATTACK ON SANCTUARIES

Attacks on values considered sacred by Muslims under the name of "freedom of thought and expression" are increasing. In **Europe** and the **USA** particularly, such attacks have doubled in the last 10 years.

TAGGED BY TERRORISM

News about Islam and Muslims are used with expressions such as "terror" and "violence". This perception is generated through the images, films and TV series produced.

PROVOCATION OF WAR

The differences of **race**, **ethnicity**, **sect**, and **opinion** in the Islamic world are deepened to form a ground for **hostility** and **war**.

LEGAL DOUBLE STANDARD

Western countries and top institutions that claim to adhere to **international law** make **double-standard** decisions in many cases that involve Islam and Muslims.

FAKE NEWS

False news is spread over social media, written and visual channels, creating **negative evaluations** about Islam and Muslims.

UNDERESTIMATING RELIGIOUS LIFE

In addition to publications and statements that undervalue **Islamic lifestyle**, immorality is legitimized and encouraged by organizations with names such as "Pride march".



CHARLIE HEBDO'S CARICATURES; DO MUSLIMS DEVALUE FREEDOM OF SPEECH?

RABIUL ISLAM

French magazine Charlie Hebdo republished caricatures of Prophet Muhammad wearing a bomb-shaped turban with a lit fuse protruding, to mark the start of a criminal trial into the deadly attack on its office not long after it published the first caricatures of the prophet.

On January 7, 2015, armed assailants raided Charlie Hebdo's Paris office and killed 12 people including some of the magazine's cartoonists. They announced that the magazine's publication of caricatures mocking the prophet had been "revenged" adding that the magazine had deliberately used blasphemy to stir up hatred against Muslims around the world by publishing the satirical caricatures.

The incendiary caricatures were first published in the Danish daily *Jyllands-Posten* on September 30, 2005; *Charlie Hebdo* then published them in full in 2006, leading its writers and cartoonists to receive regular death threats, which ended with the attack. The trial was scheduled to begin in April but was postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is expected to last until November 10.

Republishing of the caricatures has enraged Muslims around the world and renewed provocative reactions for insulting the

prophet. Meanwhile, proponents argued that Muslims are simply intolerant and devalue freedom of speech.

In 2005, Copenhagen became the center of an international controversy after *Jyllands-Posten* Newspaper published cartoons depicting Prophet Muhammad with a bomb in his turban. This led to an outbreak of verbal and physical abuse against individuals, arson, and bomb attacks on religious centers and commercial properties in Denmark. The Danish Muslims were required to affirm that the Danish constitution was above the Qur'an.

In 2006, *Charlie Hebdo* reprinted the drawings ridiculing sensitivity around Prophet Muhammad in the name of media freedom; many copies were sold. The cartoonists chose to satirize a venerated prophet, whom more than a billion Muslims regard as the ideal model of their life and values. This was seen as a direct attack on Islam and the denigration of the faith.



Protests erupted in an arc, stretching from Europe through Africa, to East Asia. European countries evacuated staffs of embassies and non-governmental organizations and Muslim countries withdrew their ambassadors.

Freedom of expression is the “right to express one’s ideas and opinions freely... without deliberately causing harm to others’ character and/or reputation by false or misleading statements.” Freedom of expression is not a right without limits. While there is no justification for the attack that took place in 2015, it should be noted that caricatures as part of freedom of expression cannot be enjoyed in a way that belittles the rights and dignity of others. Legal guarantees that prevent people from infringing on the rights and freedom of others, while exercising their rights to freedom of expression, need to be clearly defined.

Gallup poll data from Britain and France affirmed so. 57% of Britons and 45% of French said that a newspaper printing a picture of Prophet Muhammad should not

be allowed under the protection of free speech, while 35% and 40% respectively said that it should be allowed. More than 75% of both populations say that a cartoon making light of the Holocaust should not be allowed under the protection of free speech, and roughly 86% of the British and French publicly say the same about printing racial slurs. Hence it can be seen that for many European citizens, free speech is nuanced and contextual, not a black and white absolute.

When asked about the caricatures, French President Emmanuel Macron said that “It’s never the place of a president of the Republic to pass judgment on the editorial choice of a journalist or newsroom, never. Because we have freedom of the press.” While everyone appreciates the fact that a government cannot put curbs on the enjoyment of constitutionally guaranteed freedom of expression, it is important to remember that no human freedom can be absolute, and indeed none is absolute.

The sort of legal guarantees put in place to limit the freedom of expression of



people who deny the Holocaust or write negative things about the Holocaust is perfect precedence. Why would it be illegal to deny or write negatively about the Holocaust, but it is legal to offend Muslims? Discrimination and prejudice against the about 14 million Jews, named with the powerful term anti-semitism are punished with dire consequences for those who promote it. But the same prejudice toward the almost 2 billion Muslims in the world is given a red carpet.

Prophet Muhammad was born in the year 570 AD; today more than 1400 years after his death, his influence is still powerful, and about 2 billion people of all backgrounds around the world have believed in his integrity, character, evidence, legacy, and embraced Islam. Misconceptions about Islam creep in because people learn about faith from the news rather than from the Quran and the prophet. Once the religion is studied from the correct sources, it would be clear that such mockery of the religion and prophet is far from the truth.

A UN Development Program (UNDP) study entitled *Journey to Extremism in Africa*, published on September 7 found that 57% of respondents who had voluntarily joined an extremist group were either because they failed to read Islamic texts, or failed to understand what they had read. This shows that dogma and indoctrination, rather than deep religious education, is the cause of

the recruitment for violent extremism. The deeper a person is able to read and understand the Quran and its interpretation, the more immune that person is, to such recruitment.

Karen Armstrong in her book *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet* writes, “far from being the father of jihad, Muhammad was a peacemaker, who risked his life and nearly lost the loyalty of his closest companions because he was determined to effect a reconciliation with Mecca.” Diwan Chand Sharma once wrote in his book *The Prophets of the East* that, “Muhammad was the soul of kindness and his influence was felt and never forgotten by those around him.” France’s Grand Rabi Joseph Sitruk observed in the *Associated Press* in the midst of the cartoons controversy that, “we gain nothing by lowering religions, humiliating them and making caricatures of them. It’s a lack of honesty and respect”.

To sum it up, the lowering, humiliation, and disrespect towards Islam and its followers in its relation to freedom of press will require a change in two major areas; cultural sensitivity and the setting of a single standard about freedom of expression. Understanding Muslim public opinion can be key to pre-empting and preventing unnecessary conflicts. Muslim reactions are predictable and the conflicts avoidable.

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RUSSIAN MILITARY BASES

Russia, just like Western countries, uses the military bases that it has established abroad as an intervention tool to conduct its expansionist policy on a global scale.

BELARUS

- 43rd Communications Center of the Russian Navy
- "Baranavichy" Radar station.

ABKHAZIA

7th Military Base
(4,000 soldiers)

SOUTH OSSETIA

4th Military Base
(4,000 soldiers)

KAZAKHSTAN

- Baikonur Cosmodrome
- Sary Shagan anti-ballistic missile testing range
- Balkhash Radar Station
- The 929th State Test Flight Center

TRANSNISTRIA

Military troops to 'Russian Peace Force' in Transnistria

ARMENIA

Gyumri 102nd Military Base
(8,000 soldiers)

SYRIA

Tartus Naval Base
Hmeimim Air Base

TAJIKISTAN

201st Military Base
(7,000 soldiers)

KYRGYZSTAN

- Kant 999th Air Base.
- The 954 Anti-submarine Weapons Test Base of the Russian Navy, a "police station" locates on Issyk Lake.
- 338th Russian Navy long-range communication unit which is found in Chaldovar village.
- 17th radio seismic laboratory of seismic service of Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation which locates in the city of Mailu-Suu.

COUNTRIES IN WHICH RUSSIAN MILITARY BASES ARE EXPECTED TO BE ESTABLISHED IN THE FUTURE:

- Libya
- Egypt
- Vietnam
- Sudan
- Central African Republic
- Somalia
- Yemen
- Myanmar
- Venezuela
- Cuba
- Nicaragua

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مركز البحوث الاستراتيجية والاجتماعية

FORGOTTEN EXCLAVES OF AZERBAIJAN

BURAK ÇALIŞKAN

The Soviet Union's divide and rule policy and its exploitation of ethnic and social conflicts to construct artificial borders constitutes complex border problems in today's Post-Soviet countries. Besides the controversial borders, exclave areas in these regions can also cause conflicts from time to time and even wars. The term 'exclave' describes the case where a part of a state's territory is separated by another state's territory.

Complex border problems in Central Asia, especially in the Fergana Valley, are concentrated between Azerbaijan and Armenia in the South Caucasus. While the Azerbaijan-Armenia clashes that started on September 27 continue around Nagorno-Karabakh and its seven adjacent districts, an exclave region like Nakhchivan, which has no borders with Azerbaijan, comes to the fore. Yet apart from Nagorno-Karabakh and its seven adjacent districts, other small exclaves of Azerbaijan under Armenian occupation remain in the background.

Nakhchivan

Despite the rising intensity of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Nakhchivan finds more coverage in global public opinion. The exclave has no border with Azerbaijan while it does with Turkey, Iran and Armenia. Nakhchivan, which constitutes an autonomous region of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic, was disconnected

from the mainland and became an exclave after the Zengevur region was taken from Azerbaijan and given to Armenia in 1924.

Turkey's relation with Nakhchivan is quite remarkable. The Kars Treaty signed in 1921 between Turkey and USSR gave Turkey the right to intervene in the case of a third party attacking the region. In 1992, in the face of a threat of Armenian invasion on Nakhchivan, Turkey brought up the treaty and it made a deterrent effect on Armenia.

The Forgotten Exclaves

Nakhchivan is considered as a popular and large exclave of Azerbaijan. Together with the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh and its seven adjacent districts, it is also the subject of many political agendas. However, apart from these problematic areas, Azerbaijan has other exclave areas that are currently under Armenian occupation.



Yukhari Askipara

Yukhari Askipara is a region under Azerbaijan's Qazakh District. This region, which has an area of approximately 37 square km, has no connection with Azerbaijani lands. Yukhari Askipara is an exclave region located completely inside the Armenian territory. The village, which was occupied by the Armenian Armed Forces in 1992, was destroyed and the Azerbaijani population there was expelled.

The region is an old Turkish settlement among the historical artefacts of Azerbaijan Turks. Today, around 650 people live in Yukhari Askipara, which is in the Tavush region of Armenia.

Barxudarlı

It is a region under Azerbaijan's Qazakh District. Barxudarlı is an exclave area that is located completely inside the Armenian territory and not connected with Azerbaijani territories. The area of approximately 22 square km area has been under Armenian occupation since

1992. After the occupation, the Armenian population was settled in the region and it was administered as a part of Armenia's Tavush province. The current population of the region, which was established by Azerbaijani Turks in the 16th century, is around 450.

Sofulu

Sofulu, a region under the Qazakh District of Azerbaijan, borders with Barxudarlı. The region is not connected with the Azerbaijani mainland and is an exclave area within the Armenian territory. The Armenian Armed Forces occupied the approximately 40 square km area in 1992. The current population of the region is around 200.

Karki

Karki is a region connected to the Sadarak District of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan. This region has neither connection with Azerbaijani lands nor with Nakhchivan. It is an exclave area located completely inside the Armenian



territory. The name of the village, which was occupied by Armenia in 1990, was changed by the Yerevan administration to “Tigranashen”. The area of the land, located near the strategic Yerevan-Jermuk highway, is approximately 19 square kilometers.

Azerbaijani Turks who were in the region after the occupation became refugees and were settled in an area called “New Karki” in the Kangarli District of Nakhchivan. Today, there are no settlements in the region.

Two Unnamed Exclaves

Two unnamed agricultural lands, parallel to the village of Yaradullu in Azerbaijan’s Agstafa District, are referred to as Azerbaijani exclaves. These areas are also under Armenian occupation.

Armenian exclave: Bashkend (Artsvashen)

Bashkend is an Armenian exclave completely surrounded by Azerbaijani lands. Today, the area of approximately 35 square km is connected to Azerbaijan’s Gadabay District.

During the Karabakh War, the Armenian army used this area to shoot some villages in Gadabay and Tovuz. The Armenian army, which turned Bashkend into a military build-up and attacked the civilian population from this region, aimed to unite the region with Armenia by removing it from the exclave situation. While many Azerbaijanis lost their lives with the Armenian attacks since 1991, Azerbaijan gained control of the region by a counter move in 1992.

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International Law and Azerbaijan’s Right

Thirty years of occupation in Nagorno-Karabakh and its seven adjacent districts has made grave impacts since it left the abovementioned Azerbaijani territories remain in the background. According to the international law, these regions are considered as Azerbaijani territory but the Armenian occupation

continues in these areas. These exclaves belong to Azerbaijan. Even though they look like miniscule pieces of land, they have very strategic importance to the country. In addition, the rights of Azerbaijani people who were expelled from these regions after the occupation were seized. Don’t they count?

INFOGRAPHICS

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WORLD CULTURAL HERITAGE AND **TURKEY**

The **UNESCO** convention in 1972 created the "**World Cultural Heritage List**" in order to protect, promote and preserve the assets that are considered as the common heritage of **humanity**. Turkey became a party to this convention in 1983.



THE COUNTRIES WITH THE MOST CULTURAL HERITAGE ON THE LIST:



There are currently **1.121 CULTURAL** and **NATURAL** assets on the list.



The provisional list of assets under review for the **main list** includes **1.740 CULTURAL HERITAGES** from **178 countries**.

In recent years, due to the **occupation** and **civil wars** in **Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Libya**, the cultural heritage in the Islamic world has been robbed; **cultural assets are smuggled** and sold to museums and collectors in **Europe and the USA**.

International structures and **legal authorities** do not have any **sanctions or deterrent measures** against these practices.

TURKEY'S CULTURAL HERITAGE

Turkey so far includes another **18 cultural heritages** from the original list, including **83** in the provisional list.

OUR CULTURAL HERITAGES IN THE MAIN LIST ARE AS FOLLOWS:



THE CONFLICT IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH: WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT ITS GEOPOLITICS?

BURAK ÇALIŞKAN - MESUT ÖZCAN

As the effects of the crisis that emerged following Yerevan's attacks on Azerbaijan's Tovuz region in July 2020 persist, new conflicts have broken out in occupied Nagorno-Karabakh. The Armenian military offensive against civilian settlements in the Aghdam, Tartar, Fuzuli and Jabrayil regions on Sept. 27 has deepened tensions between the neighboring nations. After many civilians were killed, Azerbaijan launched military operations in Nagorno-Karabakh against Armenia.

Currently, Azerbaijan's counteroffensive is operating in the Murovdag-Fuzuli-Jabrayil axis.

Compared to previous conflicts, the parameters of the current one are very different. First of all, both parties are preparing for a prolonged fight as indicated by the declaration of martial law and mobilizations. Moreover, Azerbaijan is showing that it intends to "rescue its lands" by its multifaceted tactics.

Global, regional attitudes

Secondly, the political attitude of the great powers and regional actors in the conflict is remarkable. Moscow, which has two military bases in Armenia and organized a

large-scale drill has taken a controlled "wait and see" attitude, unlike the previous period. Moreover, Russia is one of the largest exporters of weapons and ammunition to Armenia.

On the other hand, while Moscow officially called for a cease-fire, making a joint statement with the other two co-chair countries of the Minsk Group, which was set up in 1992 by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), it did not force Yerevan to stop the clashes. According to some experts, Russia will take a more active role and try to protect the status quo in the region if Azerbaijan continues to advance.

France, which along with the U.S. is a co-chair of the Minsk Group, is currently using a hard-discourse in its foreign policy, unlike other members of the European

Union. French President Emmanuel Macron's administration wants to play an active role in the Eastern Mediterranean and Libya. Moreover, Paris aims to increase cooperation against Ankara and limit Turkey with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt, Greece and the Supply Chain Resources Group (SCRG). The Macron administration has started to use the same rhetoric for Nagorno-Karabakh.

On the other hand, Washington's agenda is different from previous years. According to U.S. President Donald Trump, regional countries should find solutions to regional problems. Despite this policy being described as "political uncertainty" by his critics in Washington, Trump believes regional nations should pay the cost of crises in their neighborhoods.

Moreover, the Trump administration does not want a new problem before the November election. After conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh started, the White House did nothing except call for a cease-

fire between the parties. According to many experts, this situation opens up new opportunities for rival actors such as Russia and raises regional power competition.

As a matter of fact, Moscow has started to focus on expanding its power following Washington's withdrawal. After increasing its influence in Syria, Russian President Vladimir Putin started to be active in Libya. Nowadays, Putin wants to be a playmaker in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Ankara is the main actor that can compete with Moscow in the region, despite some scholars and nations blaming Turkey for cooperating with Russia. There is no doubt that both countries were rivals during the Ottoman Empire and Cold War eras but nowadays, even within the power struggle, each wants to increase cooperation in bilateral relations in economics and defense while reducing the conflict in Syria.

For instance, Moscow and Ankara have different interests from Crimea, the Eastern Mediterranean to Libya and the Caucasus.



Decisionmaking actors in Turkey have not forgotten this situation, but cooperation and competition are inherent in international relations.

Before the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia started, Russia sent weapons to Yerevan and conducted a military drill. Ankara declared it was starting a similar exercise with Baku in the same period. Since the conflict restarted on Sept. 27, Turkey has continued its unconditional support for Azerbaijan.

For years, Ankara and Baku took care to develop bilateral relations in the political, military, economic, cultural and defense industries. During this period, Turkey changed the balance in favor of itself. In a sense, Ankara is one of the greatest players to stand in front of Moscow's desire to expand its regional hinterland. After the Syrian crisis, the regional competition between the two countries has been reflected in Libya, Ukraine, Georgia and now finally in Nagorno-Karabakh.

At a time when the Western world is facing great uncertainty, Turkey is playing an active role in balancing and stabilizing the region, standing up against Russia's dreams.

Military achievements

The latest conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh illustrates both sides' differing military and technological capacity. Yerevan has a strategic partnership with Moscow and uses

Russian-made technology and weapons systems that include Sukhoi Su-30 aircraft, Mikoyan MiG-29 fighters, the surface-to-air S-300 and Tor-M2KM missile systems, Tocka-U type ballistic missiles, tanks and its own unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).

The Armenian administration continues to display an image that has remained defensive in the field so far.

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On the other hand, Azerbaijan's military spending has increased in the last few years following the development of its economy through oil and natural gas exports. According to military spending data announced by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Baku's defense spending has jumped since 2010 and currently sits at almost \$3.7 billion dollars.

In the post-2009 period, Azerbaijan spent four times more money than Armenia according to some data. Along with its strong cooperation with Turkey, Baku has military agreements with Israel and

Russia. Azerbaijan's tactical arsenals include Israel-made UAVs, IAI Harop loitering munitions, drones, T-90C tanks, BTR-82A armored personnel carrier vehicles, MiG-35 helicopters, S-300 surface-to-air missile systems, Tor-M2E short-range air defense missile systems, Spike NLOS anti-tank missiles, BM-21 Grad rocket launcher systems, D-30 howitzers, Bayraktar TB2 UAVs, TRG-300 Tiger missiles, SOM missiles and Sakarya and Kasirga rocket systems.

Baku's strategic goals

When we analyzed the military capacity and international partnerships of both Armenia and Azerbaijan, data shows the Yerevan administration has an asymmetric dependence on Russia in the context of its security needs. Moscow has two military bases in Armenia and Russian-made weapons are critical for Yerevan. In contrast, Azerbaijan has some alternatives. Baku has also signed many agreements with Israel, Turkey and Ukraine. Compared to Armenia, Azerbaijan is in a more balanced position.

Moreover, in the last decade, Ankara and Baku have increased military cooperation. Turkey has begun to play an important role in Azerbaijan's defense industry. For instance, Baku is interested in Turkish-made Altay tanks and ATAK helicopters according to some reports.

Since the fighting restarted on Sept. 27, Azerbaijan has had a major advantage over Armenia, especially thanks to its military technology. While Baku declared the liberation of its territories as its main goal during the conflict, Yerevan has only been able to focus on bringing the international community to its side. The main aim of Armenia is to protect the current status quo in Nagorno-Karabakh but the conditions for a cease-fire have not been created for Azerbaijan yet.

Azerbaijan was especially effective in the previous conflict causing heavy losses to the Armenian military, making progress in some regions and revealing its defense capacity. For Baku, achieving a transformative result in the field has become a priority for the country.

The ongoing conflicts reveal a successful picture for Azerbaijan, but it is too early to have a transformative result. Considering

the possibility of pressure by Moscow and the international community for a cease-fire and the fact that geopolitical or other new groups such as Wagner might participate make absolute victory uncertain.

Another large risk is the military involvement of the great powers in the region. Moreover, the use of ballistic missiles may change the nature of the fighting. In another scenario, the battles may expand to Nakhchivan and Turkey could change its military engagements.

As a result, the liberation of Nagorno-Karabakh is the most critical issue. The Baku administration, aware of this, is continuing to use diplomatic channels but could put a stronger emphasis on its military options. At this point, Ankara has to support Baku politically, diplomatically and technologically. Moreover, Turkey should take its place at the table and join the negotiation process with the members of the Minsk Group.

On the other hand, there may be some crucial developments that could tip the balance in the south Caucasus. First of all, there is a weak status quo in the region after Nagorno-Karabakh began being occupied by the Armenians in the Cold War period.

The current situation in the region is important to Yerevan's interests as well as those in Moscow and Tehran. Azerbaijan wants to get its land back and this can change the status quo. In this conflict, some physical and mental barriers will be destroyed. Moreover, developments in this region, known as South Azerbaijan, where Azerbaijani Turks constitute the majority of the population, should be followed carefully in terms of balances of power in the region.

★This article was firstly published in Daily Sabah on October 13, 2020.



NORMALIZING THE ABNORMAL: PSEUDO-NORMALIZATION BETWEEN SUDAN AND ISRAEL

DR. SERHAT ORAKÇI

Sudan and Israel have taken steps to “normalize” their relations after a series of diplomatic efforts. In other words, Sudan has accepted to recognize Israel diplomatically in return to re-establish its relation with the US. As well known, Sudan has been on the US’ state sponsors of terrorism list (US SSTL) since 1993. However, the term “normalization” looks like a misnomer in the context of Sudan-Israel relations given the absence of any diplomatic relations between the two countries since Sudan became independent in 1956. It is quite strange to call the process normalization. The term is relative. Who decides the conditions of normality and under which circumstances?

There is a process of normalization in the Middle East and Sudan became the third country normalizing its relation with Israel after the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain. However, in this context, normalization refers to recognizing the state of Israel. So, it also means ignoring Israel’s crimes against humanity. Normalization with Israel requires the country in question to be too blind to see the Israeli apartheid regime’s crimes against Arab Palestinians and African immigrants. Normally, Israel deserves full isolation rather than normalization until it leaves its racist apartheid mentality. For that reason, we prefer naming the new phenomenon in the Middle East as *pseudo-normalization*.

Pseudo-Normalization and its Complications

I prefer calling it this way since it comes out under abnormal circumstances. Firstly, Israel has never been the main priority of Sudan being in a transitional period where high inflation, food scarcity, deep economic crisis, and polarization on society level require urgent solutions. However, Sudan’s agenda is full of Israel. Secondly, Sudan’s decision to recognize Israel comes out of the US pressure and as a condition of removing Sudan’s name from the list of state sponsors of terrorism. Sudan expert Alex de Waal points out that Donald Trump and Israel have seen obviously a good opportunity in

the desperate condition of Sudan.ⁱ So, it is a decision taken by a transitional government under the US pressure. This actually makes normalization unrealistic.

On the public level, the majority of Sudanese are against the step taken by the transitional government. Although the transitional government in Sudan is legal and legitimate, this sensitive issue requires deep discussion on the society level as Prime Minister of Sudan's transitional government Abdulla Hamdok once said. The step taken by the Sudanese transitional government has the potential to create even more division within the Sudanese society. Some political parties and civil groups have already rejected the deal (Abraham Accord). Many ask whether a transitional body has the mandate to make such an important deal.

On the surface of the Sudanese public consciousness, the abrupt decision contradicts the national memory of Sudanese for two reasons: first, Israel is not just a state; it is a racist and discriminatory state. Israel's crimes against Palestinian Arabs and African immigrants, occupation of Arab land, and ill-treatment to the Holy Masjid of al-Aqsa are all well documented. The struggle to survive against Israel's racist apartheid mentality provided a solid base for all Muslims as well as Arabs. Therefore, this abnormal mentality creates a religious outrage and protest culture in Muslim as well as non-Muslim societies.

Second, Israel had been one of the sponsors of South Sudan rebel groups seeking

secession from Sudan. It is a known fact that secret Mossad cells supported and trained rebel groups since the mid-60s. For that reason, the secession of South Sudan in 2011 was generally seen as a Zionist Balkanization project from the Northern perspective. Furthermore, the Israeli air force many times carried out bombing raids on Sudanese soil in 2009, 2012, and 2014.ⁱⁱ

Today, Sudan is recognizing Israel in return to normalize its relation with the US to gain much-needed loans from international institutions such as IMF and WB. Israel declared sending Sudan \$5 million in food aid while USAID announced \$81 million of humanitarian assistance.

After the Islamic regime ended in Sudan last year, the transitional body has taken generous steps to secularize the state system. Recognizing Israel is definitely a historic milestone in showing the bold change within Sudan's system. However, this move might easily turn into a psychodrama by wounding Sudanese consciousness on a societal level and creating more divisions amongst

the Sudanese public. A report conducted between mid-August and mid-September published by the Israel Ministry of Strategic Affairs found that 81% of Arab social media users commented on "normalization" negatively while only 5% viewed it positively.ⁱⁱⁱ The majority Sudanese Muslim population as a stronghold of Islamic culture also carries similarities with Arab countries. Demonstrations have taken place in the streets of Khartoum since the declaration of normalization. Sudan's Popular Congress Party, Sudanese Baath Party, and leader of the National Umma Party, Sadiq al-Mahdi,

*After the
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body has
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generous
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state system.*





have all slammed the deal and declared their support to the Palestinian people.^{iv} Even Brookings has described pressuring Sudan for normalization as a dangerous game.^v

Single-sided Step

The US government combining different matters all together has not made any distinction between its bilateral relation with Sudan and its recognition of Israel. President Trump is definitely seeing to write a quick success story in the Middle East before the historic election. To achieve it, the US government utilizes a broader diplomatic push without considering historical and social realities. In unordinary circumstances, Sudan has accepted to pay \$335 million to the families of victims of terror attacks taken place in 1998 in Tanzania and Kenya.

In the context of Sudan's involvement in terrorism, we are not dealing with an armed organization such as Boko Haram or Al-Shabab. The Sudanese state, with all its institutions, is blacklisted by the US. For better understanding, we have to look back to the 90s. After the 1989 military coup, the US-Sudan relation was getting very tense, especially after an Islamic regime was formed by Omar al-Bashir and Hasan al-Turabi. The new government in Khartoum rejected siding with the US in the first Gulf War. Moreover, Sudan became a host country for different Islamic movements from Algeria to Afghanistan. Between 1992–1996, the Sudanese government was the host of Osama bin Laden. Sudan's radical foreign policy direction was obviously not Western-oriented. The USAID cut its humanitarian assistance to Sudan and the country was blacklisted by the US after a

terror attack on the World Trade Center in 1993. As a result of Western pressure, Sudan expelled Osama bin Laden in 1996 and he moved to Afghanistan to form al-Qaida.

More than 220 people lost their lives as a result of al-Qaida's twin attacks on the American embassies in Nairobi and Darussalam. After the terror attacks, the US military bombed Al-Shifa pharmaceutical company in Khartoum with unproven allegations that the factory stored chemical weapons. As a result of a dangerous game between the Sudan government and the US government, Sudanese people paid heavy

prices for years of isolation and economic sanctions. This blind game only resulted in China's domination over Sudan's oil sector and infrastructure projects for years.

If there must be normalization, it needs to begin with a just and honorable agreement. Why don't we hear any apology or see any compensation from the Israeli or the US side? If one side decides and the other party only implements; it won't be a respectful deal. The Abraham Accord does not have any consensus on the society level hence for that reason historical and humanly realities in Sudan are going to shadow it.

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FINAL STEP OF ISRAELI OCCUPATION: WEST BANK ANNEXATION

NEVA KAYA

As the world struggles against the Covid-19 pandemic, Israel wants to expand its occupation of Palestine. It brings up its annexation plan to legitimize its presence in the West Bank, with the aim to continue its role as the de facto occupier in the area.

Populated with more than 3 million people, the West Bank is an important part of Palestine with its rich agricultural land and vast area. It also hosts over 900,000 Palestinian refugees.

According to the Oslo II Accord (1995), area C, which accounts for 60% of the West Bank and divided into three areas, is under Israeli control. Israel, which does not address oneself to the state of Palestine, seeks to expand its area of control and weaken the Palestinians through different aggressive policies.

The 712 kilometer-long separation barrier, which began construction in 2002, surrounded the entire West Bank and turned it into an open-air prison. Once the wall is completed, 52,667 hectares of land, corresponding to 9.4% of the West Bank, will be severed from the West Bank.¹ The barrier, 85% of which runs through West Bank territory, completely separates Jerusalem from the West Bank. It also restricts agricultural activities by

preventing Palestinians from reaching its territory. Palestinians have to go through checkpoints to cross to the other side of the wall every day for reasons such as work, health care, or education. With 572 checkpoints set up in the region, Israel follows every movement of Palestinians. In the area between the wall and the Green Line, Israelis can move without restrictions. But at least 11,000 Palestinians in the area are forced to obtain residence permits in order to continue living in their homes.²

Obtaining housing licenses has been made very difficult for the West Bank residents, citing different reasons. In the last 10 years, 6,707 buildings have been destroyed by Israel and 10,312 people have been displaced. 78% of the destructions were carried out in Area C and 20% in East Jerusalem.³

Israel is implementing a systematic intimidation policy as a tool to expand its occupation in the region. Direct attacks constitute the most important part of this policy. In this context, Israel occasionally



carries out attacks – such as the Jenin refugee camp attack in April 2002 – which Amnesty International described as “war crime”. But attacks are usually organized to target individuals. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), at least 558 Palestinians have been killed and more than 100,000 Palestinians injured in such attacks in the past 10 years.⁴

The sole way for Israel to solidify its presence in its occupied territories is through the establishment of Jewish settlements. Therefore, the Zionist regime is pursuing every possible policy to establish a dense Jewish settlement in the West Bank. The number of illegal settlers in the area has increased by around 600% in the last 30 years. Today, the number of settlers, which was about 120,000 in the beginning of the 1990s when the Oslo Accords were signed, has exceeded 600,000.⁵ At present, 22.7% of the West Bank population is made up of Jewish settlers.

In summary, Israel tries to intimidate Palestinians by raiding Palestinians' homes and businesses in the West Bank, dividing fields and houses by separation barriers, encircling the area and people from all sides, imposing curfews, organizing attacks and continuously increasing the number of illegal settlers.

The Israeli occupation, which has been imposed step by step since 1967, has now reached its latest move on the agenda. Israel is trying to turn more area into its territory, starting with an area involving 30% of the West Bank consisting of illegal Jewish settlements. The upmost significant reason for accelerating the annexation plan is the US presidential election. Israel has obtained its biggest political gains in its history since Donald Trump took office as president in January 2017. Now it wants to add yet another one to its gains while Trump is still the US President.

On the other hand, the current Israeli government is composed of actors who have led to three elections in a year, while differences within the government continue. Benny Gantz, leader of the Blue and White Party and Minister of Defense, said cautious steps should be taken on the annexation of the West Bank and that they would not support the annexation of areas where Palestinians live heavily.⁶ So it appears that Netanyahu is bringing up the annexation plan to manipulate the agenda of both the fragile nature of Israeli politics and the corruption cases filed against him.

The failure of other countries and international organizations such as the EU and the UN to react against the steps taken in violation of international law in terms



of the US-Israel partnership is the most important factor that facilitates Israel's policy in the annexation process.

In addition, the events in areas of intense conflict such as Syria and Yemen, the coronavirus agenda that has caused the Palestinian issue receded into the background, as well as political division both among the Arab world and inside Palestine itself, has enabled Israel to push ahead with its annexation plan.

It is known that a large number of Israelis do not support their government's annexation. In fact, some pro-Zionism Jewish organizations in Europe and the United States are also against it. Various countries including Jordan, Turkey, and the Gulf states made statements condemning the annexation. Some of the Trump-era US policymakers on Israel – like Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner – think the annexation should be phased in. Because they are worried that the dialogue between Israel and the Gulf states, which began in late 2018, could be disrupted.

Israel has been developing strategic partnerships with several Arab countries, notably the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, over its opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood and Iran. It also has military partnerships with these countries in the Eastern Mediterranean and

Libyan crisis. Israel, along with the UAE in Libya, is backing warlord Khalifa Haftar. It is on the same side as Egypt regarding the future of natural gas in the Eastern Mediterranean.

In May, the normalization of relations between Israel and Turkey was especially on the agenda in the Turkish media. Israel's relatively cautious political steps in the Eastern Mediterranean and in the Libyan crisis are thought to likely to improve relations with Turkey. Israel's diplomatic representative in Turkey Roey Gilad said that although there are points of disagreement between Turkey and Israel, a diplomatic relationship could be developed through common interests.⁷ But the biggest obstacle to improving relations between Turkey and Israel is Israel's violations of right against the Palestinians. The annexation of the West Bank is also Turkey's "red line".

The Israeli government was expected to submit its annexation plan to the Israeli parliament Knesset on July 1. But it was announced that the plan had been delayed. The delay came following warnings from the US to prevent Israel's deterioration of relations with countries of the region, prevent increasing reactions against it, and to prevent doubt over its legitimacy. But the annexation plan is not entirely shelved. Israel will bring up the West Bank annexation plan again as soon as possible.

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WHY NOW?

Although the annexation of the **West Bank** has been part of Israel's project for years, and is not an urgent act, the Israeli government has particularly accelerated its steps in the recent period despite the **coronavirus** agenda due to the following reasons:

1. The loss of **Donald Trump** in the presidential election to be held in the **USA** in the 1st of November may strike Israel's annexation target, especially that **Democrat Party** candidate **Joe Biden** is known to support a two-state solution.

2. **Netanyahu** wants to increase public support for him by manipulating the agenda for **corruption cases** he is indicted in.

3. The components of the currently **Israeli government** that has been established after **three times** elections a year, are considered one of the factors to speed the annexation decision. Annexation is needed to be accomplished before any possible **political crises** that may arise due to this fragile structure in Israeli politics.

THE DECISION OF ANNEXING THE WEST BANK

REACTIONS TO THE ANNEXATION PLAN

- **Palestinian Authority:** All agreements with Israel have been **suspended**.
- **European Union:** Proposed to **impose sanctions on Israel** for annexation.
- **Gulf countries:** Due to their opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood and Iran, the **Gulf countries** have been unresponsive to Israel's actions and sometimes they even favor **Israel**.
- **Jordan:** The peace agreement signed with Israel in **1994** will be suspended.
- **Turkey:** At every occasion, Turkey points out that Jerusalem is a **"red line"**. The **Turkish government** announced that all international mechanisms will be operated.

FACTORS FACILITATING ISRAEL'S DECISION

1. The political division and the economic weakness in **Palestine**.

2. The existence of a pro-Zionism president such like **Donald Trump** who fulfills every Israeli demand.

3. Arabs being divided due to conflicts and civil wars among themselves.

6. As the coronavirus pandemic becoming the number one topic in the world, all crises, especially **Palestine**, fall into the background.

5. Europe's inability to develop an effective policy against Israeli violations due to the crises Europe experiences.

4. Many Arab countries, especially **Saudi Arabia** and the **United Arab Emirates**, are getting closer to Israel as they share the opposition against **Iran** and **Muslim Brotherhood**.



POLITICAL INTERESTS IN SYRIAN HUMANITARIAN AID

KENDA SHAHERHAWASLI

On June 29-30, 2020 “IV Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region” was held. With the participation of 80 governments and non-government organizations, the conference succeeded in mobilizing aids to Syrians inside the country and in neighboring countries, including aids for hosting communities, through pledges totaling 5.5 billion USD for 2020, and multi-year pledges of around 2.2 billion USD for 2021. The pledges were focused solely on humanitarian aid, not reconstruction aid, which will have to wait for the war to end and an achieved political settlement to take place.¹

Unfair distribution, the downturn in aids

A report on donation in 2019–2020 shows that the pledged grants decreased; from 7 billion USD in 2019 to 2.4 billion USD in 2020 (65%). Meanwhile, the value of the grants has decreased from 5 billion USD in the first half of 2019 to 1.7 billion USD in the first half of 2020, i.e. it decreased by 65% as well.²

The report shows that in 2019, 10 billion USD of grants was contributed by donors for that year towards Syria and countries most affected by the Syrian crisis in the region (Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt) exceeding 43% from the original pledge of 7 billion USD for 2019, of which 1.7 billion USD was already available, with 71% of the 2.4 billion USD was pledged for 2020.

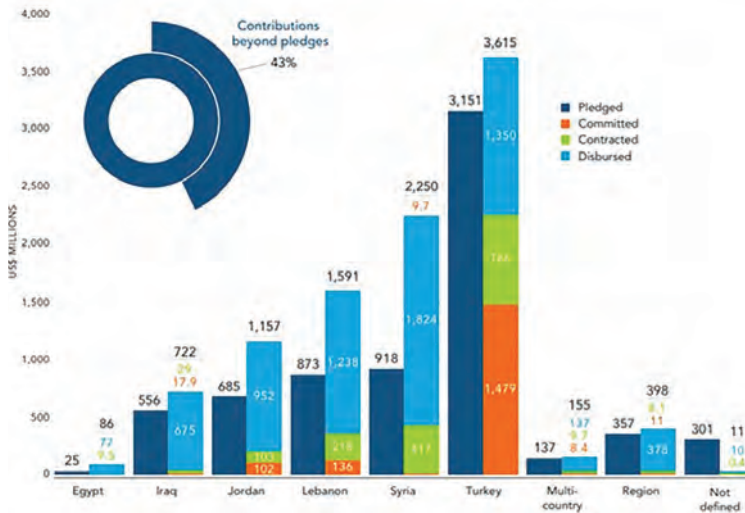
Also, in 2019, Turkey received the largest amount of grants at 3.6 billion USD (36%

FIGURE 2.1: Funding contributed against funding pledged, a) grants 2016, b) grants 2017, c) grants 2018, d) grants 2019, e) grants 2020 and beyond (as of 27 February 2020), f) loans 2019 and beyond



of the pledged fund). Almost a quarter of the funding was directed to Syria (2.2 billion USD), followed by Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt.

FIGURE 3.1: Grant contributions against pledges by recipient country, 2019

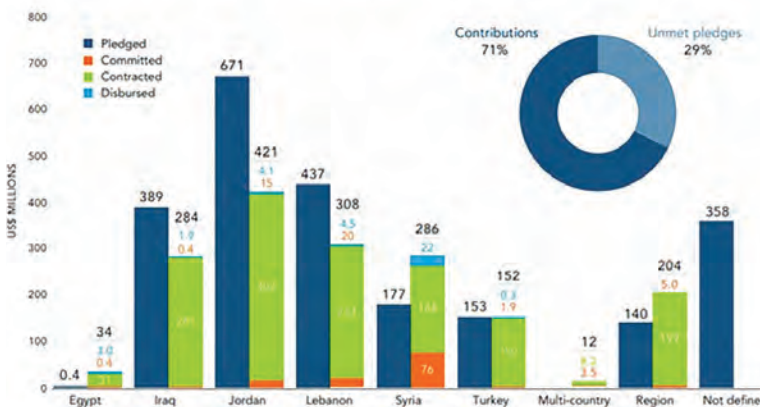


But in terms of grants for 2020 and beyond, the total contribution was only 1.7 billion USD. A quarter of this has been allocated to Jordan, and 18% to Lebanon. Less than a fifth (17%) was allocated to Syria and Iraq respectively. Aid to Turkey was 9% (152 million USD), and Egypt 2%.

Humanitarian aid is turning into political leverage.

Russia has been trying to use the humanitarian dossier as a tool for political gain. Since the beginning of 2020, Russia has been able to restrict the entry of aid to Syria, opening access of only two Syria-Turkey borders. And then in July, it blocked any decision that seeks to extend the entry of aid from any crossing until the end of the year through its veto right.

FIGURE 3.2: Grant contributions against pledges by recipient country, 2020 and beyond



These figures have led many Syrians to question the criteria of distributed aid because the need factor does not seem to suit this year's aid ratio distribution. Syria ranked fifth in the list of aid recipients,

channelled through the Syrian government since transport and distribution of aid will provide indirect economic support to the Syrian regime and allow it to have control over, or access to, distribution areas.



Recently, Russia blocked the entry of cross-border aids especially through Al-Yarabiya crossing between Iraq and northeast Syria, an area controlled by Kurdish militias. This action has hindered the overall humanitarian response and disrupted the UN's ability to deliver specialized medical equipment to the area.

At that time, the UN informed its relief agencies that they were permitted to fund private charities operating in northeast Syria only if they were registered in Damascus and authorized to work there by

In 2015, when Madaya and Zabadani (towns in Rif Dimashq governorate which had major famine) were suffering from the blockade, Assad forces prevented the UN from delivering any food and medical aid even when the people were dying because of hunger. They also stole much of the aid before it arrived. This policy was done in many areas in Ghouta or south Damascus.

Many Syrian activists believe that humanitarian aid should not be subject to a Security Council vote, nor should it be a place to settle political scores or be a lever for some countries for their own interests.



the Syrian government. The funding freeze comes as the World Health Organization (WHO) and other UN relief agencies have raised concerns that they lack sufficient access rights to respond to the health needs of some 2 million people in the region.³

This Russian/Syrian policy reminds us how they used aid as a weapon to starve the civilians.

Others say turning aids into a political matter has led the UN to overlook its humanitarian role and allow it to present unconvincing justifications when they fail to help those in need.

Russia seeks to exacerbate the human suffering in areas outside the Assad regime control by preventing the entry of humanitarian aid to the affected people

inside Syria, and raising the resentment against the economic sanctions that the Caesar's law imposed on the Assad regime and its supporters.

On the other hand, Russia is trying to thwart America's efforts to pressure the Assad regime, and push it to lift or reduce these sanctions. It puts the US between two options, either to make the US appear to make an ill-considered decision by targeting civilians or force it not to object for the delivery of aids through the regime-controlled areas exclusively.

China's Ambassador to the UN - who just used veto power to thwart the entry of humanitarian aid from outside the border a few days ago - blamed unilateral sanctions against Syria, which have been imposed by the US and the EU, for exacerbating the country's humanitarian situation and urged that they be lifted.⁴

At least 30 billion USD worth of humanitarian aid went into Assad's pockets.

Foreign Policy newspaper mentioned that UN agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO) have permitted the

Assad regime to take control of the 30 billion USD of international humanitarian response, using donor funds to skirt sanctions and subsidize the government's war effort. The bulk of these billions in diverted funds are from the same Western governments that imposed the sanctions.⁵

The Syrian government has insisted that all operations of the UN Coordination Office for Humanitarian Affairs must be stationed in Damascus, and distributed through the government-controlled - Syrian Red Crescent.

It has also stipulated that no delivery of the Syrian Red Crescent aid should take place without the approval of the country's High Relief Committee, which requires signatures from the Syrian Minister of Health, the Air Security Branch, and the military intelligence agencies. This policy allowed the Syrian regime to control the places, distribution times, and beneficiaries of the aids.

The report estimated that between 2-18% of the total UN assistance reached those in regime-controlled areas, and the government used these aids to support fighters and those who were in the same political loyalty while depriving the opposition areas, even though they were in urgent need of it.

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CAESAR ACT'S IMPACT ON THE SYRIAN ECONOMY

KENDA SHAHERHAWASLI

The Caesar Act has entered into force in June 2020. The U.S. government on June 17 published a list of names, personalities, and companies that will be subject to the sanctions imposed, depending on their business or service provisions to the Al-Assad regime.

The bill, which was passed by the U.S. Congress on November 15, 2016, and signed by the President on December 21, 2019, seeks to expand former sanctions on the regime by targeting Syrian government institutions and individuals, both civilians and officials, as well as all foreign companies' owners that have commercial or financial transactions with Syria; it also targets other parties funding the Syrian regime such as Russia and Iran, whether this funding is related to the country's military activities, reconstruction efforts in government-held areas, or human rights violations.

These sanctions will include anyone – individuals, companies, or governments – dealing with the Al-Assad regime in the oil/natural gas, military aircraft, construction, and engineering sectors; those who provide

spare parts or maintenance services to Syrian airlines, and those who serve the regime with oil derivatives or financial debts.

The Syrian central bank will also be under these penalties should its involvement in money-laundering operations be proven. Also, any individual involved will face sanctions such as having their assets frozen and being denied entry into the United States.

Six conditions for lifting sanctions

The Caesar Act raises the civilian protection emblem in Syria and made it clear that these sanctions will exclude all humanitarian assistance forms, such as food or medicines, and it also gives the US president the



authority to exclude sanctions on non-governmental organizations that deliver these kinds of humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people.

David Pollock, Bernstein Fellow at The Washington Institute explained that the United States' strategy aimed to avoid sanctions in areas out of the Syrian regime's control by giving it a "compensatory strategy", which will intensify the reconstruction service, and increase the support of the project which provide jobs security or foreign exchange as a loss compensating attempt for the Caesar Sanction's causes.¹

Recognizing the potentially negative impacts of the sanctions on Syrian civilians, the Caesar Act provides for humanitarian exemptions. Specifically, section 302 allows

the President to waive the application of any sanction with respect to NGOs providing humanitarian assistance in Syria.

Section 401 of the Caesar bill outlines six requirements for the lifting of U.S. sanctions on Syria, which are:

- 1- End to Syrian and Russian aircraft bombing civilians;
- 2- Iranian, Syrian and Russian forces, as well as entities connected to them, no longer restrict humanitarian access to besieged areas, and allow for civilians to leave freely;
- 3- All political prisoners are released, and the appropriate international human rights organizations are given full access to Syria's prisons and detention facilities;



- 4- Bombing of “medical facilities, schools, residential areas, and community gathering places, including markets” by Syrian, Russian, Iranian forces, as well as entities connected to them, ceases;
- 5- The possibility for the “safe, voluntary, and dignified return of Syrians displaced by the conflict” is achieved;
- 6- Accountability for “perpetrators of war crimes in Syria and justice for victims of war crimes committed by the Assad regime, including by participation in a credible and independent truth and reconciliation process.”

Protecting civilians or American interests?

Many Syrians consider the Caesar Act to be an important step in reinforcing pressure on the Al-Assad regime, but they doubt that it could topple the regime or remove Assad.

Also, Syrians believe that this bill does not stand as an effective tool to prevent the recurrence of military battles, because since it was signed in the beginning of 2020, the Assad regime and Russian forces continued military operations in Idlib in a clear challenge to this decision.



Hazem Nahar, a Syrian politician, and scholar considered that the Caesar Act was not intended to overthrow Assad, but rather to achieve U.S. policy goals in Syria by blackmailing the regime and its partners and to give U.S. military the legitimacy in Syria that would allow it to control the oil fields and prevent the regime from cashing in from it.

Nahar said that U.S. policy in Syria is seeking to weaken the Syrian regime so it could participate in the political process, and the U.S. also wants to send a clear message to both Russia and Iran that it is “the only country who can pass a political solution or allow the reconstruction process.”

But it also gave the Assad regime and its partners space when the sanctions came into effect six months after the bill was signed, perhaps to give reasonable time to states and institutions with ties to the regime to arrange their businesses.

Nahar argued that the Caesar Act has delegitimized the Al-Assad regime unless it makes drastic changes in its structure or its policy, but on the other hand, it will have a negative impact on Syria’s already deteriorating economy, which will make a life for the Syrians even worse.

The Caesar Act was not intended to overthrow Assad, but rather to achieve U.S. policy goals in Syria by blackmailing the regime and its partners and to give U.S. military the legitimacy in Syria

An unprecedented collapse in the Syrian currency

During the war (2011–2019), the Syrian currency lost much of its value. The dollar value doubled 10 times against the Syrian lira, but since mid-2019 the Syrian lira collapsed fast enough to move from 500 to 3000 lira against the dollar last month, which was accompanied by the signing and subsequent entry into force of the Caesar Act.

The causes of the collapse include the Caesar Act, the continuation of a military solution, and the impact of economic and political turbulence in Lebanon, which was considered Syria’s smuggling and foreign exchange haven.

Internal problems within the Assad family, which came out to the public, especially with Bashar Al-Assad’s cousin Rami Makhlouf, who alone controls 60% of the Syrian economy, contributed a significant change in the exchange rate, as Al-Assad

was trying to force Makhlouf to allocate part of his wealth to pay off some of the debts that Russia demanded its interference in Syria, while Makhlouf considers that these measures are nothing but an attempt to reduce his economic clout in favor of the President’s wife and her family.



Hard days ahead

It is noteworthy that the Caesar Act is not the first sanction hit in Syria's history.

The first sanction began in 1979 after the U.S. classified Syria as a state sponsor of terrorism, followed by the 2004's "Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act" sanctions, and the U.S. and the EU have also sanctioned the war-torn country after 2011.

It is not easy to pinpoint the exact effects of the implementation of the Caesar Act on the ailing Syrian economy, but many economists expect that it will increase the country's economic weakness, which is already suffering now from the war and may accelerate its collapse.

Civilians will face growing difficulties in securing their basic needs. Syria's poverty

percentage, which has reached 83%, will increase,² and more problems will emerge due to poverty, malnutrition, or even suicide, especially if the regime continues to spend

the government budget on military operations rather than providing basic commodities or humanitarian aid.

On the other hand, we can expect that the difficulties in the humanitarian sector will escalate as a result of surging scrutiny of everything related to Syria as NGOs will encounter crisis in financial transfers and delays in the delivery of grants and financial aid, and some NGOs' Bank accounts may be closed due to suspicion and restrictions.

Henceforth, humanitarian projects there will take more time and effort to

implement; and many parties may refrain from dealing with them to avoid being subjected to sanctions.³

We can expect that the difficulties in the humanitarian sector will escalate as a result of surging scrutiny of everything related to Syria...

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CAESAR LAW AND THE ASSAD FAMILY

On the 17th of June, the United States Congress imposed **The Caesar Syrian Civil Protection Act** (Caesar Law), which enforces sanctions on individuals and organizations that provide assistance to the regime of **Bashar al-Assad**. The law targets Bashar himself, his wife **Asma al-Assad** and **39 senior supporters** of his regime.

Moreover, this law includes companies and financial institution that act on behalf of Iran and Russia in Syria.



ASMA AL-ASSAD:

The wife of the president of Syria Bashar al-Assad. She is the head of the Syrian Pension Fund that was used in financing the war.



BUSHRA AL-ASSAD:

The elder sister of Bashar and the wife of Defense Minister Assef Shawkat, who was assassinated in 2012. Bushra who is also on the EU sanction list, has been living in the UAE since 2012 providing lot of money to Assad's regime.



MAHER AND MANAL AL-ASSAD:

Maher who is the brother of Bashar, and his wife Manal are held responsible for killing and torturing thousands of people.



THE HAMSHO FAMILY:

Since 2011, Mohammed Hamsho has been one of the profiteers of the war. Hamsho is the Secretary of the Syrian Chambers of Commerce, the general manager of Al-Shaba Investment and Tourism Company as well as a member of the Mining Industry board. His three sons are among the main supporters of the regime.



GHASSAN ALI BILAL:

Bilal is the secretary of the 4th Division and Maher's right hand. He personally ordered the torture of thousands of people to death. The 4th Division provides finance to the regime by establishing checkpoints on Damascus-Beirut and the airport road, collecting tribute and kidnapping people.



OPERATION CLAW AND THE FUTURE OF TURKEY-IRAQ RELATIONS

SONER DOĞAN

For many years, to ensure the security of the southern border and the country as a whole, and to curb terror attacks; Turkey has organized operations in northern Iraq against the PKK. Turkey's operations in northern Iraq with the bilateral agreements signed with Iraq are legal in the eyes of international law. Iraq cannot stop the PKK's attacks on Turkey from its territory. In addition, the Baghdad government remains silent about the PKK's settlement in northern Iraq. In this case, Turkey has justified launching its operation in northern Iraq.

On May 28, 2019, Turkey launched a series of operations in northern Iraq named as Operation Claw. The aim of the operation was to destroy the PKK. In fact, the concept of changing security operations in Turkey as of 2015 was carried out in the operation. The new security concept is based on the strategy of finding and destroying terrorist organizations beyond its border. Operation Claw was followed by Operation Claw-2 and Claw-3. Prior to Operation Claw, a meeting was held between Turkish and Iraqi officials regarding the operation. Unlike other operations, the Turkish Air Force (TAF) has adopted the strategy of establishing a permanent base in northern Iraq with Operation Claw. It is aimed to destroy the action and settlement areas of the PKK in the region. During Operation Claw-1-2-3, many high-level officers of the PKK were neutralized.

On the other hand, while Operation Claw-3 continues, the TAF has launched Operation Claw-Tiger on June 15, 2020 in northern Iraq. The depths of Iraq were reached with joint operations with air-ground forces participation. For the first time, Turkey launched its air operations inside Iraq, exactly 200 kilometers away from the border. The purpose of Operation Claw-Tiger is to expand the 40-kilometer area that was taken under control in northern Iraq through previous operations and to eliminate the PKK's camps and settlements established in Iraq. In addition, it is to prevent the PKK's transition to Syria and to cut the supply line to the PYD/YPG, which is the Syrian extension of the PKK. It is stated that the TAF established nearly 30 military bases during the operations.

However, after Operation Claw-Tiger, the Iraqi government began to criticize Turkey's steps in northern Iraq. Iraqi



Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi who was former intelligence chief is unhappy about Turkey's continued operations against the PKK inside the Iraqi territory, which accidentally killed two high ranking Iraqi border guards in northern Iraq. Subsequently, the Iraqi PM lobbied Arab nations to gain support for what the Iraqi Foreign Ministry called a united front to force Turkey to pull out its troops that have infiltrated into Iraq. Iraqi leaders then made a serious diplomatic contact abroad against Turkey's military operations in Iraq.

Al-Kadhimi talked about Turkey's operations during a meeting with US President Donald Trump on August 20. The US advised Turkey and Iraq to negotiate to resolve all disputes related to the PKK and Turkey's operations against it. Two weeks after Kadhimi's trip to Washington, Macron visited Iraq to discuss the same issues with Kadhimi. Macron said that he supported Iraqi sovereignty in coordination with the United Nations and criticize Turkey's operations in northern Iraq. Also, the Iraqi President Barham Salih called on Turkey

to stop violating Iraqi sovereignty during his meeting with Macron. Salih declared that Turkey's operations in Iraqi territory violate international law and good neighbor relations. Hence, Salih said, Turkey must respect Iraqi sovereignty. Meanwhile, Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein discussed Turkish military operations with France, German, and the UK, calling for them to take an active role to stop Turkey's violations on Iraqi territory. In addition, Iraqi officials asked the Arab League to condemn Turkey's operations in Iraq. As a result, the Arab League strongly condemned Turkey's operations and it urged the country to respect Iraqi territory.

Prior to the tension in Turkey-Iraq relations, the TAF launched an air attack on regions of northern Iraq, targeting the PKK on August 11. During the attack, two high ranking Iraqi border guards and their driver were killed in the airstrike. According to local media, the Turkish drone strike had targeted the border guards while they were meeting the PKK in northern Erbil. Following these developments, the



Iraqi government canceled the planned visit of Turkish Defence Minister Hulusi Akar. Also, the Iraqi Foreign Ministry summoned the Ambassador of Turkey to Iraq Fatih Yıldız. The Iraqi Minister gave the ambassador a letter of protest calling on Turkey to stop its cross-border operations. Since the beginning of Turkey's operations, the Iraqi Foreign Ministry has given three letters of protest. However, Turkey rejected the protests and announced that the military operations would continue in Iraq, which it said were necessary for border security no matter where they may be. Turkey accused Iraq of not taking essential measures against the PKK on its territory.

Nonetheless, after Iraq's political steps against Turkey's operations, it has also taken some economic steps against Turkey. Iraq is Turkey's fourth-largest export market. Turkey wants to open a second crossing with Iraq to increase bilateral trade of approximately \$20 billion a year. But Iraq has suspended the plans to open the border-crossing. Also, the Iraqi government holds another critical economic card. Iraq argues that since 2014, without the permission of the Iraqi government, Turkey has been taking oil from the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in northern Iraq hence violating the terms of the 1973 agreement. Therefore, it applied to the International Court of Arbitration (ICA) in Paris and demanded approximately \$25 billion in compensation from Turkey. Iraq can use this card, but this is not a suitable step. In 2019, when the Iraqi President visited

Turkey, he discussed trade cooperation with the Turkish President. Both leaders agreed to improve bilateral trade. Also, Turkey emphasized that it was ready to give financial and developmental support to Iraq. Additionally, Turkey mentioned that it was ready to provide a loan of \$5 billion to rebuild the country.

Even though there are strong ties between Iraq and Turkey, Baghdad has recently adopted a more cautious approach towards

*Iraq is
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year.*

Turkish products on its domestic markets. Turkish agriculture and food products especially pasta and eggs have been banned in order to support local producers. The paramilitary formations within the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) in particular want to react against Turkish policy through the banning of Turkish products. For this reason, this situation is critical and it requires internal political balances. The COVID-19 pandemic, the deterioration of the economy with the drop in oil prices, the increase in corruption, the continuation of attacks by Iran-backed Shiite militia groups against US bases, Iran's control of Iraq through its militia, assassinations of a protester, all of them summarizes the state of instability in Iraq. In addition, the failure to identify the perpetrators of

the violence that started in October 2019, in which more than 500 demonstrators lost their lives, should also be noted. This is because the protesters accused the Iraqi PM of staying passive about the incident. These are the main problems faced by the Iraqi PM.

Meanwhile, Iraqi PM Kadhimi made a series of strategic appointments by changing the managers of the Iraqi Central Bank, commercial banks, customs, ports, and airports, in particular to fight corruption. In addition, the call for early elections by the Iraqi religious leader al-Sistani and the above-mentioned corruption are among the main issues that the Baghdad administration should deal with when it comes to public demands. The Baghdad administration is required to deal with the problem first. Creating tension with Turkey due to its operations in northern Iraq and to reflect that tension in the economy is not a policy to be adopted.

Although Iraqi politicians have shown their political reactions against Turkey, the discourse of radical steps taken towards Turkey should not be considered. The Baghdad administration should focus on diplomacy to solve the current problems. Baghdad has been in search of a balance against the Iranian factor in the country in recent years. Hence, if the Iraqi government

follows an exclusivist policy against Turkey, it may worsen the current state of instability. Iraq does not want to directly confront Turkey. On the other hand, Turkey invited the leader of the regional Kurdish administration in northern Iraq Nechirvan Barzani to Ankara. Turkey did its homework in assessing its relationship with the regional Kurdish administration in northern Iraq. Also, Turkey wants to know Iraq's reaction. However, while Turkey declares its determination in fighting against the PKK in Iraq, it wants to keep the open-door diplomacy to resolve existing problems with the Baghdad administration. After Barzani's visit to Ankara, PM Kadhimi went to the regional Kurdish administration in northern Iraq. According to media reports, they discussed Turkey's operations and the latest development on the borders. Clearly, PM Kadhimi does not want to escalate tension with Turkey because of Iraq's current issues. Both countries are doing their best to keep calm and develop their relations.



GEORGE FLOYD PROTESTS' ANATOMY: TURMOIL IN AMERICA, IMPACT IN EUROPE, VICTORY IN EUROPE

ASSOC. PROF. DR. MEHMET ÖZKAN

The Illegal and racist practices against blacks in America have long been one of the most important issues in American domestic politics. The rights-law struggle of blacks in America was intensified in the 1960s upon the killing of leaders such as Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, which was an important turning point for black people in their demand for equal rights in America. However, on May 25, 2020, the killing of George Floyd by the police in Minneapolis took a different dimension and caused protests, backlash, and reactions both in the US and around the globe. What do these cascading events mean? At what stage are blacks' rights struggle in America and where is it heading to?

The US has been facing problems in terms of racism for a very long time. While racist whites and evangelist Christians were increasing their influence politically and socially, both the Democratic and Republican Party tried to address this demand without touching on the country's structural problems. Financial capitalism, which is the basis of the US system, tried to survive by reproducing itself without any reforms. In the protests that black Americans staged in the past, US political structure reacted in the same way it always had, never touching the essence of the issue. That structure knew how to successfully calm down the protests and then set aside those demands.

Since the 1960s in particular, the Black people's demand for their rights had almost no impact on American politics. The primary reason for this is that they lacked strong, outstanding, and charismatic

leaders. Accordingly, the protests were scattered without leadership. The second reason is directly related to the police status in American domestic politics. In the US, the police were not established to protect the public; in fact, the basic philosophy of the police is to protect the system. Since the system is considered much more important than the people, mistakes made by individual police officers have never been questioned.

The atmosphere created surrounding Floyd's death is very different from that in the past. Trump's obviously racist and xenophobic speech, the feeling of being marginalized, the systemic racism especially in the police structure, the reaction of most people to financial capitalism combined with the Covid-19 epidemic and its economic fallouts, promoted socially supported and much stronger and broader-than-expected demands.



Following Floyd's death, the protests demanded for the first time a systematic inquiry and a new social contract between the state and the blacks. Nonetheless, systematic inquiries in America would probably lead to a civil war especially if these inquiries resulted in some sort of dissolution and reduction of the police. A total of 2.5 million weapons were sold in the US just in June 2020. Weapon purchase rates have been steadily increasing for the past four months. In a country where everyone is armed or can be easily armed, the perception of "weak" security forces will push people to defend themselves. This kind of development might result in the collapse of the American system.

What was thought to be a game-changer in the issue of racism in America might not be all that in the end? Despite their inclusiveness and the fact that they were widespread nationwide, protests have

ended with almost no political impact. This protest wave was quietly withdrawn by firstly looting and then by tearing down statues.

That is the case in the US. But Floyd's death gave birth to something else, somewhere else outside the US.

The major impact of these protests was not in American domestic politics but in Europe. The removal of the statues of rich slave traders in European countries has led the West to confront its own colonial and slaver past. In addition, the demolition of the statues of the founding fathers should seriously question the humanitarian principles of the West. These protests emphasized that the past of the West is loaded with inhuman practices that can't be bragged about. Accordingly, Europe will have to implement new policies concerning these statues.



But above all else, the biggest winner of this political process was US President Donald Trump. As of the second day of the demonstrations, especially with the increase of vandalism and looting, Trump suddenly turned these events into a public security issue, and in the end, he was right. Demonstrations were taken under control after the national guards interfered; even the military was involved in the capital Washington DC. Trump, who declared himself president of the war period, soon announced that the protests were taken under control as a result of his determined policy. In addition, Trump quickly gained the political status that he partially lost due to Covid-19 and restored his “successful president” image when he presented the demonstrations as a public security issue. He took advantage of the state mechanism to the end. In this process, he organized his own base and held his first campaign of the election.

The legitimate and justified desire of the blacks who started the protests fell victim to looting and violence. Blacks have been soothed, but the reality in America will

not probably change in the short term. Meanwhile, the rights of blacks in the US or better attitude of the state toward them are not discussed anymore. Thus, the issue that started with a rightful claim became a kind of public debate in light of Trump’s polarizing discourse and the looting of the demonstrators.

Although blacks in the US have been on the continent since the foundation of America, they have never had the same rights and promises as whites.

Although blacks in the US have been on the continent since the foundation of America, they have never had the same rights and promises as whites. Blacks in America and the West are always excluded. The US is the place where Europe’s political and systemic slavery continues. In this sense, the US is interestingly the place where Europe’s colonial and slaver past reproduces itself in a modern system; although it is not explicitly stated in the constitution, it has been the place where it continues with actual practices and in a systematic way. Probably such protests will continue in the future, but their impact will always remain politically

ambiguous. In fact, systemic problems can only be resolved with systemic solutions; for now, nobody deals with the problem systematically.

INFOGRAPHICS

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PLANTS AND WILDLIFE SMUGGLING AND TURKEY

It's the act of collecting **plants, seeds and animals** or their body parts from a particular area, and **being shipped** out of the country without an **official permission**.

Turkey is one of the targeted countries by the smugglers, due to its biodiversity and endemic wealth.

Since 2007, **73 cases in 22 provinces** and **136 plants** and wildlife smugglers from **20 different countries** have been identified in our country.

WHICH METHODS DO THE SMUGGLERS USE?

- Business trip
- Cultural tourism
- Personal vacation
- Participation in academic organizations.

WHO IS APPLYING FOR THOSE SMUGGLERS AND FOR WHAT?

- To use by states in scientific activities
- To develop new products and R&D by multinational companies
- To use by individuals as personal collections
- To obtain illegal earning or income

METHODS USED FOR COMBATING SMUGGLERS

- Raising social awareness
- Improving airports and customs inspections
- Training and educating tour guides, inspectors and other related jobs and institutions
- Cooperation with local people who live in regions where endemic species are dense
- Conducting special studies by the security and intelligence units in this field



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AN OVER VIEW OF POST-INDEPENDENCE TURKEY-INDIA RELATIONS

DR. SERAJ AHSAN

Despite Turkey-India's lengthy relations, contemporary Indo-Turkish ties can be divided into two phases, the first being since India's independence until the mid 1980s; the second from the mid 1980s. During these periods political and diplomatic differences have been kept at the corner due to changing priorities of both countries, while globalization helped them enhanced their trade ties. However, during most part of the first phase and in the early period of the second phase, Turkey-India relations dropped because of non-convergence in the goals and objectives in both countries' foreign policy.

Turkey's foreign policy went through different phases, especially after the end of WW II. The first phase was from 1945 to 1960. In this period, Western dependency dominated Turkey's foreign policy. It was also the period of Turkey's disappointment with the West that led to the beginning of Turkey's reconciliation attempts with the Soviet Union in particular and the Third World countries in general. However, this shift did not mean that Turkey lost its significance in the Western security cultures.

During the 1970s, Turkey observed alienation from the West and tried to make reliable partners outside Western alliance. After the end of the Cold War was a new phase in Turkish foreign policy with other countries that exhibit multi-regional approach. The purpose of this approach

was to give more attention towards the so-called Third World countries particularly Asian countries.

So far as India is concerned, it pursued a non-alignment policy after its independence from Britain. India tried its best not to be part of any camp in the Cold War era but it appeared that India's foreign policy inclined towards the erstwhile USSR from the early period of the Cold War. After the end of the Cold War, a major shift took place in India's foreign policy because the beginning of 1990 saw a rapid transformation in world politics; India was forced to adopt the changes that were coming due to globalization and liberalization.¹

During the Cold War, the level of relations between Turkey and India remained very low. There can be several reasons for this, one being security. In the Cold War, for

security reasons, Turkey had no alternative but to join the Western bloc. As mentioned, India's effort was to maintain non-alignment in its foreign policy outlook. Post-Independence, Turkey and India chose different paths; therefore their relations had been at minimum level.²

Due to the general security environment in the region, Turkey chose to be part of the Western military alliance system. In 1951, Turkey made an effort to establish the Middle East Defense Organization (MEDO) and subsequently, joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952, the Balkan Pact in 1954 and the Baghdad pact in 1955 that later paved the way for the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO).

India was primarily against these military alliances. This reflected the divergence of interest between Turkey and India. India was also skeptical of Turkey because of

Pakistan presence in most of these alliances. Moreover, Turkey's deep ties with Pakistan in defense sector also alienated India from Turkey.³

The policy differences overshadowed Indo-Turkish relations, despite major agreements between both countries for having close cooperation in the early 1950s. The agreements became less significant due to Turkey's inclination toward the Western block, while India had been skeptical toward the very bloc due to its history in the fight against Western colonialism.

To build solidarity among Asian and African nations, in 1955 a conference in Bandung, Indonesia was held. In the conference, Turkey criticized the dubious character of non-alignment policy and defended the West and its alliance; while perceiving socialism and communism as threats to its stability. At the time, the majority of the Third World countries were under the



influence of USSR. This also furthered the gap between Turkey and the Third World countries, including India.

Despite being an anti-colonial country, Turkey felt the negative implication of its support to the Western block in the United Nations. Turkey also faced isolation in several issues. Therefore Turkey realized the importance of shifting its stand as far foreign policy is concerned. Under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the AK party-led government tried its best to shift its axis from the predominantly Western to Eastern discourse.

Turkey and India: Between differences and agreements

Kashmir and Cyprus have been the core issues between the two countries at diplomatic front that prevented Turkey and India to have amiable relations for a long time.⁴ Traditionally, Turkey supported Pakistan on the Kashmir issue and differed with India's claim that Kashmir is an integral part of India.⁵

Turkey has also been supporting Pakistan's stand on the Kashmir issue in different International forums such as the United Nations (UN) and the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC). This also caused strains in Turkey-India relations. But for some years Turkey's stand regarding the Kashmir issue has softened. However, Turkey still maintains that the UNSC resolutions and plebiscite on Kashmir should be implemented.

Cyprus has been another contentious issue between Turkey and India. Since Cyprus' independence from Britain in 1960, Turkey has been concerned about the ethnic Turkish communities living in the northern part of the Island, and historically they have been kept marginalized by the majority Greek Cypriots.

In 1974 Turkey sent its military to north Cyprus to protect Turkish Cypriots from Greek aggression. India criticized Turkey for making the de-facto division of the Island. Occasionally, the Cyprus issue also creates tension in Turkey-India relations. Ankara has often considered India's support for Cyprus as a reciprocation of Turkey's support for the Kashmir issue.⁶

Kashmir and Cyprus have been the core issues between the two countries at diplomatic front that prevented Turkey and India to have amiable relations for a long time.

Economic Relation between India and Turkey

As mentioned earlier about the shift in Turkey's foreign policy orientation from the late 1960s, Indo-Turkish relations started to move towards some sort of positive directions. In the 1970s, India and Turkey came close to sign several agreements. Two of them in economy and commerce sectors, (a) agreement related to trade (1973), and (b) agreement regarding economic and technical cooperation (1978), and another agreement related to cooperation in science and technology (1976).⁷

In the beginning of 1980s Turkey started to open up its economy replacing its

earlier etatism/statism policy. Turkey made the effort to restructure its economy by negotiating with the IMF, the World Bank and several Western countries. New opportunities emerged in infrastructure sectors, export-import and capital investment to name a few. Turkey's new business opportunities soon attracted several countries. Some multinational companies and organizations showed their interest to do business in Turkey; they liked to tap the emerging prospects in the Turkish market that continues dynamically.

Subsequently, India and Turkey signed an agreement in 1983 for the setting up of a joint Economic Commission (JEC), with an understanding and provision of JEC meetings to be held in both countries alternately. Due to this endeavor, the economic factors took further prominence in Indo-Turkish relations that led to build the economic ties between two countries.⁸

Until the late 1980s, bilateral trade between India and Turkey was very low, and India's export to the country was minimum. In the early 1990s India also started to liberalize its economy. The total trade volume between India and Turkey, particularly India's exports, grew rapidly. India started to export products such as

cotton yarn, synthetic yarn, organic dyes, organic chemicals, denim, steel, granite, antibiotics, carpets, unwrought zinc, sesame seed, TVCRTs, mobile handsets, clothing and apparel. Turkey's exports to India were poppy seeds, minerals and fittings and steel products.⁹

Furthering the trade, several Turkish and Indian companies, most of which in the construction and energy sectors, either took major projects in their respective countries, or opted to avail the cooperation of the host country's company. Indian Railway Construction Company, Tata Motors and Oil Cooperation are such companies in this respect, with current volume of trade Surpassed \$8 billion, \$7 billion of which in imports and \$1.2 billion in exports.¹⁰

Turkey has rapidly developed its economy and today it is seen as one of the world's most vibrant economies. In addition, it also became an important player in the regional transit matrix of Gas and energy; it links the West and Central Asia to Europe. From this, it is understandable that India is in no position to ignore Turkey despite their political differences; they maintain different stands as far International issues are concerned.

End Notes

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HINDU NATIONALISM: A RISE OF NEW RELIGIOUS RADICALISM IN INDIA

RABIUL ISLAM

“When Indians voted in parliamentary elections earlier this year, they did more than just elect a government. They also participated in the birth of India as a Hindu nation with a state to match.”¹ This statement was written by Kanchan Chandra, professors of politics at New York University, about the election where Narendra Modi was elected as Indian prime minister for the second time. It could be easily said that Narendra Modi is a Hindu nationalist leader who supports the ideology that defines Hindustan (India) as a state for Hindu people. This nationalism is beyond cultural or ethnical nationalism because the word “Hindu” represents religion; therefore this is a “religious nationalism” which excludes other religions. Hindu nationalism has been continuing since the late period of British colonialism in the Indian sub-continent. However, it began to get radicalized, especially after its independence from the British. After 2014, when BJP won majority seats in the parliament and formed the government under Modi’s leadership, the world could see the establishment of the total “radicalized nationalist movement” based on religious identity. After his election, the ideology of Hindutva² started to spread with state support. The ongoing violent activities against religious minorities, especially against Muslims, increased. State-sponsored violent activities became rampant throughout India. A long process of Hindu radicalization turned into violent extremism. For instance, the government openly threatens Muslims and makes laws against them. In many parts of the country, Hindus are openly using violence on Muslim minority. Muslims are not safe in India; their properties are under threat. Hindu violence is increasing in the name of Hindu nationalism. Muslims are not even able to practice their religious rituals; they cannot protect their religious values.

On top of that, what is happening in Kashmir is blatant violation of human rights. They are conducting inhuman and violent acts against Muslims in Kashmir. In spite of these violent activities conducted by the government or with support of the government, no one is criticizing Hinduism and Hindus as much as they criticize Islam. No one is talking about Hindu radicalization or Hindu terrorism as they are using these terms for Islam.

Why? In this paper, I will try to find the answer to this question. Why are there not much criticism and discourses about Hindu radicalization, violent extremism of Hindu radicalized nationalist movement or Hindu terror?

This article will consist of four parts. In the first part, I will give brief information about Hindu nationalism and its main political and social branches such as BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) and RSS (Rashtriya



Swayamsevak Sangh). In the second part, I will try to indicate the activities and laws conducted by the government and Hindu people against Muslims. The third part of the article will try to find out why BJP is doing this and why people support the activities. Finally, in the last part of the article, I will focus on the silence about Hindu radicalization, why is no one talking about violent activities against Muslims in India? The main argument of the article is that the Indian government uses some policies to legitimate their activities and to get public support (mostly Hindus) such as using propaganda, creating fear of Islamic terror and Muslims, the ideology of Hindu nationalism and most affectively using violence in the name of counter-violence.

Hindu nationalism, BJP, and RSS

To understand Hindu nationalism and what is happening in India we should acknowledge about the BJP ruling party and its main supporter, RSS. BJP won the national election for the first time in 2014. Since then the rise of Hindu nationalism has been recorded in India. However, Hindu nationalism is not a new phenomenon in India.

“The Hindu nationalist movement in India--collectively known as the Sangh Parivar--emerged in response to colonialism in the 1920s. It aims to ensure the predominance of Hinduism in Indian culture and society and seeks to drive out religious minorities



from the country, claiming that Hindus are threatened by growing Muslim and Christian populations.”³

Shangh Paribar has many organizations that are actively working in various areas such as politics, education, and culture. *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS) is the principal organization of the Paribar. It is a paramilitary organization with millions of members with a strong educational wing known as the *Vidhya Barati*. This educational wing of RSS plays a significant role in spreading Hindu nationalist propaganda to two million students by operating twenty thousand schools in India.⁴

“The Hindu culture is the life-breath of Hindusthan. It is therefore clear that if Hindusthan is to be protected, we should first nourish the Hindu culture. If the Hindu culture perishes in Hindusthan itself, and if the Hindu society ceases to exist, it will hardly be appropriate to refer to the mere geographical entity that remains as Hindusthan. Mere geographical lumps do not make a nation. The entire society should be in such a vigilant and organized condition that no one would dare to cast an evil eye on any of our points of honour.”⁵

Here, RSS founder Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar explains about the vision and mission of the organization. Its main goal is to make India the land of Hinduism and therefore spreading Hindutva (Hindu nationalism) ideology. This is a paramilitary organization with millions of volunteers working for Hindu nationalistic ideas. When Indians won their freedom from British rule

in 1947, they established a pluralistic democracy based on secular principles.⁶ Nevertheless, their eventual goal was shaping India as a Hindu state. Through the process they got radicalized and finally, we can see a radicalized Hindu nationalist movement under the ruling party of India.

RSS was banned on the charge of murder of Gandhi, the founding father of India. Godse, known as RSS member killed Gandhi because he believed Gandhi gave Muslims too many rights in the country. Godse was arrested and members of RSS were sent to jail. “Godse was convicted of Gandhi’s murder and was hanged. But in July 1949, the government lifted the RSS ban. An official investigation later absolved the RSS of any involvement in Gandhi’s death.”⁷

If the Hindu culture perishes in Hindusthan itself, and if the Hindu society ceases to exist, it will hardly be appropriate to refer to the mere geographical entity that remains as Hindusthan.

RSS has a strong presence in social, cultural, educational, labor, developmental, political and other fields of nationalist endeavor today. The *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP) is the political wing of RSS and the largest political party in India. Now it is the ruling party of India since the 2014 national election in which the party won majority seats under Narendra Modi’s leadership. BJP has been working for Hindutva ideology from the beginning being the political wing of, and with the support given by RSS. “The Gujarat incident” known as crime

against humanity is an example to show BJP and Modi’s intention. On February 27, 2002, some Hindu religious volunteers were reportedly killed in a train attack by “Muslims.” Beginning February 28, the

state of Gujarat witnessed unimaginable violent activities by Hindu nationalists against Muslims. They killed hundreds of Muslims, burned their business places, houses, and raped Muslim girls. The police stood by during these brutal activities. At the time of the incident, Modi was chief minister of Gujarat, who said that it was a “Hindu backlash” in response to the train attack.⁸ It was state-sponsored terrorism against Muslims in the city under Modi’s control, who currently is the prime minister of India.

What is happening to Muslims of India?

Before talking about the lacked criticism on Hindu radical nationalists and Hindu radicalism it would be better to focus on the incidents and violent activities happening against Muslims. The government’s new laws and regulations against Muslims, the situations of Muslims and their properties will be examined and explained to show the extreme radical activities of Hindu nationalists.

The BJP government has taken some steps against Muslims. The most controversial is the current Citizenship Amendment Bill. These days we read news of how deadly protests spread across India over this citizenship law, which was approved on December 11 2019, mostly for excluding Muslims from citizenship. Protests broke out at universities across the country, including Hyderabad, Varanasi, and the capital New Delhi. “Opposition parties say the law is discriminatory as it singles out Muslims in an officially secular nation of 1.3 billion people. Muslims form nearly 15 percent of the population.”⁹

“If ever in the post-independence history of India its secular character was under the threat of obliteration, it is now. The Citizenship Amendment Bill, the latest but not the last episode in the “politics

of belonging” in India, has Muslims in its crosshairs. Any other explanation given by the ruling dispensation is malarkey.”¹⁰

Indian journalist Ritu Sharma wrote the above quote for *The Diplomat* to explain the bill. Yet the Indian government does not accept the accusations and gives various explanations for public acceptance on the bill. However, their explanation is really “malarkey” as Ritu Sharma said. Besides, the Babri mosque issue and the decision of India Supreme Court (November 2019) by which they handed over the mosque to Hindus for the construction of a temple is another example of government steps against Muslims.

“The Muslim side in the legal battle of Babri Mosque case possessed all the evidence under the law that the site belongs to the masjid”¹¹ said Zafaryab Jilani who was fighting the case. He also said that “the historic mosque, widely known as Babri Masjid, was built in 1528 during the reign of the first Mughal emperor Zahir ud-Din Muhammad Babur in today’s Ayodhya in the central Indian province of Uttar Pradesh (UP) and there was no claim of any Hindu deity having been born at the site.”¹²

Indian Muslims are not secured under the BJP government. They are not able to do their religious rituals; their properties and houses are under threat. A lot of incidents against Muslims occur every day in many parts of the country. Muslim girls face verbal and sexual harassment. Sometimes there would be news about a Muslim family who was beaten by Hindus for eating beef, some times for any other reasons. “Between May 2015 and December 2018, vigilante cow protection groups killed at least 44 people—mostly Muslim—accused of slaughtering, transporting, or consuming cattle.”¹³ Sangeeta Kamat and Biju Mathew (2003) describe the Gujarat incident (2002) as following, which is a good way to understand the situation of Muslim minority in India:



The stories included descriptions of murderous, slogan-chanting mobs of youth carrying swords, gas cylinders, guns, and sticks that isolated Muslim men from women, raped women in full view of their families, slayed infants with swords, destroyed Muslim-owned property, homes, and mosques, and chased the escaping crowd to set them on fire.”¹⁴

Indian journalist Manoj Singh described an incident that took place in the Uttar Pradesh (2017) under Uttar Pradesh’s BJP-appointed chief minister Yogi Adityanath, “I saw the burned shops. I saw the Muslim men who ran the shops trying to douse the fire. I knew one of the shopkeepers. He was very emotional. He said, ‘Look what has happened to me. I’m ruined’.”¹⁵

Another issue to focus on to understand the situations of Muslims in India and India-controlled-land is that of Kashmir. To some extent, it may be something

beyond religious issues but what happened recently in Kashmir was a violation of human rights. The special status of Indian-controlled Kashmir was revoked by the BJP government to be under the control of the federal government for easy intervention. Hannah Ellis described the human rights violation done by the BJP government for *The Guardian* as follows:

“The decision by the Indian government, led by prime minister Narendra Modi, to revoke Jammu and Kashmir’s constitutional autonomy and split it into two territories under the control of the federal government – bringing an end to seven decades of semi-autonomous rule – was followed by a series of militaristic measures. Tens of thousands of troops moved in, former chief ministers, legislators, and separatist leaders were detained, curfews and travel restriction were imposed and all communication methods, including phone access to the internet, was cut off.”¹⁶



Why do people support...do they support?

Why is Modi's government doing and supporting these radicalized activities? As we mentioned earlier BJP is the political wing of RSS, the radical Hindu nationalist movement whose main goal is to reshape India as a Hindu state. Although India is a secular, democratic, multi-religious and multi-cultural country, BJP is doing this openly because it estimates Hindu nationalism idea will gain as much support as it does in Israel. When we focus on the situation of India and Israel we can see a lot of similarities between both countries. Modi is using the nationalism idea for populism. BJP's vote increase from 31.4% in 2014 to 32.2% in 2019¹⁷ shows that Modi succeeded in his populist activities. "A Pew Research Center poll in 2017 revealed that 88 percent of Indians held a favorable view of him (Modi), with 69 percent holding a "very favorable view."¹⁸

This is interesting since India is a country with a secular constitution. It is a fruit of long-time work or 'a profit of a long-run investment'. All branches of RSS have been working for a long time to spread Hindu nationalism idea to the Hindus. They did many services and other activities to get support, and eventually, they are now profiteering their investment they in the past. Sangeeta Kamat and Biju Mathew (2003) describe in detail why people support Modi and his government:

The Hindu nationalist movement tried to introduce religious minorities such as Muslims, Christians, Jewish, and Shiks as the 'other' who are not Indian.

"The Hindu nationalist movement would not succeed without long-term cultural, social, and paramilitary work that lays the foundation for a specific trajectory of politics that is amenable to escalation

into organized violence at particular moments, such as the Gujarat 2002 pogrom. A little-known service wing of the RSS, the Sewa Vibha, largely does this long-term work. It offers service and development through public activities such as schools for the poor, particularly in tribal areas, emergency relief disaster-struck regions, blood banks, free eye checkups in rural areas, distribution of clothing, group homes for widows, and organized tours temples. Sewa Vibhag has a network of "one-teacher schools," staffed usually by males who have undergone training in RSS shaka and who's a teacher is paid by the RSS. Such entities ensure that rural and expenses remote tribal

areas have functioning schools, creating an ideal setting for propagating RSS ideology of Hindu supremacy."¹⁹

Moreover, the Hindu nationalist movement tried to introduce religious minorities such as Muslims, Christians, Jewish, and Shiks as the 'other' who are not Indian. "All these communities are depicted in the writings and history textbooks of the movement as 'outsiders', or in the case of Muslims as 'invaders' who arrived into what Hindutva followers deemed a Hindu land."²⁰

Besides, Modi's policies in the economy may help him to win the second round. He supports free trade and foreign investment



only in high-tech sectors, a stance illustrated by a pithy slogan “computer chips but not potato chips.”²¹

Why is no one talking about Hindu radicalization or Hindu terror?

The Indian government uses policies and creates discourses to legitimize their activities including open and secret support to violent activities throughout the country. They are propagating against Muslims and slandering Islam all the time. Using memories such as the Mumbai attack and discourses of ‘Islamic terror’ and ‘Jihad’ they create fear among the people of the country. “The Muslim is discursively constructed as a site of fear, fantasy, distrust, anger, envy, and hatred, thus generating desires of emulation, abjection and/or extermination.”²² The media is a significant tool the Modi government uses easily for propagating and creating fear since “significant private and corporate funding supports the Indian news media which has developed a cozy relationship with the Modi government.”²³ “Public

concern over the threat of terrorism in India is high. In 2013, India had the fourth highest number of citizens who labeled Islamic extremist groups as a “major threat” out of 40 countries polled.”²⁴ Discourses of ‘Islamic terrorism’ and ‘Islamic Jihad’ are

the cause of this fear. “According to a 2013 Pew Research Center poll, 82 percent of Indians view Islamic extremist groups as a threat, with 67 percent labeling them as a “major threat.” Only three out of 40 countries polled had a higher percentage of citizens who labeled Islamic extremist groups as a ‘major threat.’”²⁵

Nationalism discourse is another tool of legitimizing what is taking place in India. Some of the government actions are justified

Some of the government actions are justified in the name of nationalism and protecting the nation. Therefore, rejecting those actions or criticizing them may label the critics as anti-nationalist.

in the name of nationalism and protecting the nation. Therefore, rejecting those actions or criticizing them may label the critics as anti-nationalist. For instance, people “have seen those who question the BJP’s actions and its total clampdown on the Muslim-majority Kashmir valley publicly shamed as being anti-national.”²⁶ Moreover, when we focus on the definition or what Hindu nationalism means, we can see all kinds of activities against religious minorities are becoming ‘national’ rejection that may label a person as ‘anti-national’. Parita Mukta (2010) gives a brief explanation of Hindu nationalism:

“Hindu nationalism today is firmly grounded in reformulating historical traditions to conform with its politics of vendetta (see Romila Thapar, this volume.) Within this, the

political and social trajectories of the Sultanate and Mughal periods, as well as the time of British rule, are not only constructed as a fall from an original state of purity, but the citizens who today belong to the Muslim and Christian

faiths are reduced to standing in for the Invader, the Plunderer, the Desecrator, and are positioned as treasonable subjects to be disciplined and suborned within the nation-state. The (constructed) threat to the Hindu polity and Hindu community then necessitates both an offensive to protect these two entities and a larger attempt to reach out to Hindus living outside of the original homeland.”²⁷

Finally, the most influential and active way used by the Modi government to legitimize the activities against Muslims is the ‘security’ discourse. Violence in the name of counter-violence or extremism in the name of counter-extremism gives the Modi government legitimacy and public support. ‘Security’ is the magic word here thanks to which discourse governments pick to legitimize their illegal violent actions against certain groups. Dibyesh Anand from the University of Bath came up with a constructivist explanation about labeling or defining someone as a threat. He created a close link of security with identity politics and said that ‘how we define ourselves depends on how we represent others’. Representation of others as a threat means we will need security for ourselves. This ‘us’ and ‘other’ or threat and enemy of us is constructed by ourselves based on our identity or interest. This logic of the discourse of security dictates that the security of the ‘self’ facilitates and even demands the use of policing and violence against the ‘other’. He also used this explanation to illustrate the case of Hindutva’s politics of representation, which legitimizes anti-Muslim violence in the name of securing the Hindu body politic at various levels.²⁸ “This is the logic of this discourse of security that enables extreme violence to be normalized, systematized and institutionalized.”²⁹

India has counter-terrorism/counter-violence programs to fight, especially, ‘Islamic-terrorism’. The Indian government

has several intelligence, military, and police organizations that work to launch counterinsurgency operations, sometimes with the help of the paramilitary and other local groups, though some of these groups have been accused of perpetrating human rights abuses.³⁰ Besides, India has many legislations fighting against violence and terrorism. “However, some legislation has been highly controversial, such as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA). AFSPA, which gives unconditional permission to Indian security forces to shoot on sight, has been implemented in several Indian states since 1958 in response to insurgencies.”³¹

To conclude, it can be seen that although India uses or support the use of violence against Muslims, people are not criticizing these actions and no one is talking about Hindu radicalization, Hindu terror or Hindu extremism in India. It is mostly because of the policies used by the Modi government such as propagating, creating fear of ‘Islamic terror’, violence under the nationalism and security discourses. Many state-sponsored violent activities take place in India against Muslims. Muslim minorities’ properties, homes, and lives are under threat. They are living in a country where they can be killed easily, their girls can be raped, and their business places may be burned by any radical Hindu nationalist who is either a member of RSS, an organization of radicalized Hindu nationalist movement or a normal Hindu who thinks India should be a state exclusively for Hindus. Modi and RSS’ BJP are enjoying support from most Hindus thanks to the long-term activities they have done in spreading their ideology. Representing Muslims as a threat for Hindus has enabled the Modi government and his supporter to use violence and make new laws and regulations against Muslim minority and therefore, no one even criticizes these actions or use Hindu terror/Hindu radicalization discourses for Hinduism.



End Notes

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INFOGRAPHICS

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the Cosmetic INDUSTRY & HARMFUL CHEMICALS

The cosmetic industry is one of the fastest growing in the world. Today it has a market share of **540 billion dollars** and expected to exceed **750 billion dollars** in 2025. The average cosmetic market share in Turkey is **15 billion TL** and is growing annually by **10%**. However, this growth means that the threat to human health increases exponentially.

ACTUALLY, THE COSMETICS INDUSTRY DEPENDS ON HARMFUL CHEMICALS.

THE HARMFUL CHEMICALS USED IN COSMETICS.

- Billions of people are daily exposed, especially the **hand and face**, to more than **500** chemicals.
- These chemicals are in every cosmetic product from **tooth pastes to shampoos, to skin care products and makeup.**
- The content and effects of chemicals, many of which are proven to cause **fatal diseases**, are hidden by **international companies.**



DISEASES CAUSED BY COSMETIC:

- Many Types of Cancers
- Hormonal Disorders
- Allergic Reactions
- Skin Diseases

THE PRODUCTS:

- Makeup
- Skin Care Products
- Teeth & Mouth Care Products
- Perfumes
- Hair Care Products
- Bath Products
- Deodorants

HARM IS NOT LIMITED TO HUMANS!

- Millions of animals** are **killed every year** in experiments to measure the possible effects of the products.
- The packaging of the **120 billion** product produced by this industry brings an **incredibly heavy burden on nature.**
- The used cosmetics **destroy the ecological system** when they get mixed with water or soil.

MOST COMMON AND HARMFUL CHEMICALS

BHA/BHT, DC red pigments, Dioxin, Phenoxyethanol, Formaldehyde, Formol, Phthalate, Lanolin, Oxybenzone, PABA, Paraben, Petrochemicals, Silicon, Sodium Loryl Sulfate (SLS), Talc, Triclosan, Artificial colorants and fragrances.



HAS MICROFINANCE SUCCEED TO FUNCTION AS AN EFFECTIVE TOOL TO FIGHT POVERTY?

SUEDA NUR ÇOKADAR

705 million¹ people in the world suffer from extreme poverty, and the number is increasing every year. The most prominent problem of these people, whose daily earnings are lower than 1.90 dollars and depend on other people's help to survive, is their lack of access to a stable financial support to help them stand on their own two feet.

While facilitating the production of wealth since 1970, liberalization in the finance sector had limited intervention capability of governments. Despite the success in the application of social and economic policy at the macro level, with no intervention by government bureaucracy, and the increasing significance of economic growth at the global level, there hasn't been much of a change in the ability of the poor to benefit from these economic opportunities. Global capital grew, credit capabilities and brandings increased, export goals widened, yet the 3rd world or Southern countries stayed undeveloped under the new economic and political order. On the contrary, many countries paralyzed their economies by resorting to foreign loans and failed to distribute their wealth equally.

Certainly, there are poor people all over the world. However, in regions with

basic economic problems like Southern-Asia Pacific and Sub-Saharan Africa, poverty inflated like a balloon and direly affected the public. Factors like insufficient governmental support, rapid population growth, not to mention economic turbulences such as slow economic growth, high inflation, import-bound consumption and devaluation, seem to have sabotaged investment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Different solutions are debated due to the absence of a unanimous formula to fight poverty. International unions like the UN initiate programs to fight poverty by calling for the initiation of economic forums such as the World Bank and civilian movements for the organization of international cooperation. In this regard, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) seems to be the most prominent global plan in the fight against poverty.



One of the subjects regarding the fight against poverty at the global and regional level is undoubtedly the microfinance method. Aside from the macro goals on the governmental level and large corporations, in 2005 the UN officially supported this method, which aims at supporting micro initiatives to minimize poverty in small residential districts. Henceforth the year 2005 was announced as “the year of micro credit”.

What is Microfinance?

The core of microfinance, which made its name in the 70s and 80s in the global agenda, is the provision of funds for the poorest people which cannot benefit from the commercial banking system of a given country and, thus, helping them fund their own businesses. The individual who uses microfinance is not only going to have their own basic needs, but also going to form a wealth and protect their future.

The term “microfinance” expresses financial services, which include microcredits. Therefore, microcredit becomes an economical system that aims at public welfare, increase of growth and national revenue per capita by adding the figures created by small businesses into production.² As it is well known, the biggest limitation for the underprivileged to funds is their lack of sufficient requirements. The ability of poor people to convert their talents into income through funds is thought to be a solution for poverty, especially in rural areas. Therefore, the aim of providing small amount of money to the underprivileged who cannot obtain credit through common procedures was for them to fund their own business independently; and at the macro level, to solve the country’s unemployment problem. It was believed that an unprecedented leveled wealth could be formed with the creation of small businesses.

The first microfinance methods were applied in Germany; however, the popular



ones were those applied in Bangladesh. German puts its microfinance activities as its official development policy; they used it as a tool to support the country's macro economic growth. The system in Bangladesh that popularized microfinance was born as a special initiative that aims entirely at the rural growth.

Bangladesh University lecturer Muhammad Yunis started to encourage poor people – who had to deal with loan sharks to be able to work in the rural sides of the country – to generate income by lending them small amounts of money. The aim was to enable them to buy the basic tools and items that they need for their crafts and to free themselves from loan sharks. The amount of the first credit was 27 dollars per capita. It was seen possible for them to move from an “extreme poverty level” to “mild poverty level” with the small loan that freed themselves from their debts to loan sharks. Bangladesh-centered microcredit system that developed since the year Yunis launched the system with his own individual initiatives was institutionalized in 1983 under the name “Grameen Bank” and increased its loan capacity.

This system turned into a way to salvation for countries in South America, Asia, and Africa where poverty is chronic; approximately 70,000 micro credit institutions were founded in 58 countries. Despite the common view that it was working without a hitch, these institutions that work with the financial sustainability logic couldn't

find any solutions besides placing high interest rates despite their substantial difference from commercial banks. Though these banks work to help the poor, they must also make profits and financial sustainability. Collaboration with NGOs, receiving government support, or working in a financial-institution style changes the way the credits and aids are returned.

Microfinance institutions differ in some ways in each country. Besides the banks and financial foundations that aim at making profits, many non-profit organizations work

Besides the banks and financial foundations that aim at making profits, many nonprofit organizations work actively in the microfinance sector.

actively in the microfinance sector. For instance, while some banks in Indonesia work with low interest rates and support the rural population, there are banks that work like a cooperative. Similarly, in Malaysia, stronger government-backed microfinance banks were founded and many Islamic financial institutions entered the microcredit sector. Though not being entirely a microfinance example, Turkey's KOSGEB, which supports small businesses, can be named as a successful institution in this area.

However, financial wealth cannot form any kind of development on its own. Financial markets that take form between the thin line of risk and safety are directly linked to infrastructure,

foundations and labor capacity besides the creation of financial wealth. The right investment and the effective use of the capacity and population are important in risk management.³

Did it Work?

For poor people, to get loans based upon trust means a guarantor is not needed and the main requirement is the usage of fund in establishing a business. The payback time of microcredits, which especially aims at women's employment, is rather short. In many applications, the payback due date is two weeks, along with high interest.

Despite the number of payback rates (98%), the payback conditions could hamper the target outcome. Even though low-budget credits enabled the rural population to fund their businesses, in many instances, high interest rate payback conditions prevent targeted revenue in the already stunted economic atmosphere. As a matter of fact, analyses carried out in the towns where loans are given show that only 5% of the people could benefit from it, while the situation of the 45% of the people worsened and the other 50% could only stabilize their condition by getting loans from other banks.⁴

Some people take loans to pay other debts or make ends meet; some do it to open businesses. Therefore, only 5–10% of the people could truly benefit from the loan and able to continue their businesses. This figure corresponds to only 1% of the population that used the loan. Many microcredit customers were not able to find the right market for their businesses and had to shut down their stores or workplaces.

Microcredit firms were founded almost everywhere in Bangladesh's rural areas for mechanism control. However, in payback time, the relationship between the firm and the customers turned from a creditor-credited into a bully-bullied relationship. By seizing the properties of microcredit users that fail to payback, poverty was in fact deepened instead of terminated. This problem is not only caused by lack

of control, but also by the specifications regarding movement areas and rights of microcredit institutions in law.

In an environment where natural disasters take place, health care is weak, viral diseases are common, general economic situation is poor and individual poverty rates are high, how can individual investments progress in such a time when risk and trust balance couldn't be addressed?

Can NGOs Play a Role?

An important step in the provision of microcredits is to determine the right beneficiaries. Even though government-backed microcredit seems to be an effective method, countries with weak social justice and unstable regulations might cause the program to reach the wrong people. In this regard, it is important for non-profit organizations to prevent this by making microfinance as part of their aid programs. NGOs' wide communication network, their direct connection to poor households and their constant donation flow can play an advantageous role in microfinance initiatives.

One dead-end of the aid program is the donation culture with which people have to live an aid-bound life. To reach and provide funds to help people open their business seems a more possible role to be taken by NGOs. In order to strengthen this system with each NGO's entrepreneurship goals, the setup of affective methods in the juridical area is necessary. Because if these steps are not taken, these NGOs might in fact shift their role from providing aid to working as a finance firm. To prevent such negative instances, cooperatives that are created legally with the mediation of NGOs in countries with strong control mechanisms can create alternative work opportunities to fight poverty.



With this in mind, it can be seen that microcredit is not a feasible method to fight poverty in the institutional area. Microfinance is a system with constructional issues that may lead to new humanitarian problems in the process. In addition to not being able to lift the poor from poverty, economic and social structures that enrich certain group of people seem to be dragging poor people into a system of even more financial debt. If it were a method that could function rightfully on its own, the situation of poor people would improve parallel with the growth of microfinance institutions.

Micro-entrepreneurship can be used as an effective tool in the employment attempts and creation of wealth. This is because it

can play a welfare-improving role in the lives of underprivileged people in the cities. However, the same method might be harder to implement in rural areas.

No interest-impropriation system seems to be feasible to fight poverty in both urban and rural areas. This system may serve as an indicator of the increase in aid and fight against poverty, with the prevention of loan sharking.

Micro development policies that are supported with public policies will not give the targeted results. Without governments' macro-economic precautions, encouragements and the drop of inflation, it seems wrong to expect miraculous results from micro credits.

End Notes

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INFOGRAPHICS

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ANNEXATION OF THE WEST BANK



ISRAEL'S VIOLATIONS IN THE WEST BANK

1. In the last 10 years, 558 Palestinians were killed in Zionist attacks and more than 100,000 were wounded.
2. In the last 10 years, 6,696 buildings were demolished, 10,282 people were displaced. 78% of the demolitions was in **area C**, and 20% took place in **East Jerusalem**.
3. The Zionist regime controls the Palestinian's movements with 572 check points.
4. Palestinians live a **prison life** as they can't go out of their houses whenever they want.
5. There are 671,000 Israeli illegal settlers living in 150 illegal settlements in the West Bank.
6. Due to the **Apartheid Wall**, the West Bank has been disconnected from the entire world.

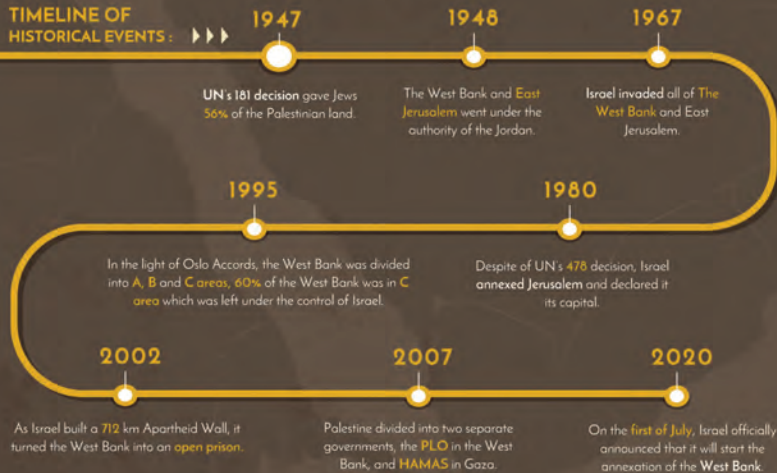
TOTAL AREA:
5,659 km²

POPULATION:
3 MILLION

REFUGEE CAMPS:
19 CAMP

NUMBER OF REFUGEES:
MORE THAN 800,000

TIMELINE OF HISTORICAL EVENTS:



THE LEGAL STATUS

UN's Resolutions that declared Israel's occupation of the West Bank illegal:
181 (1947) - 194 (1948) - 242 (1967) - 338 (1973)



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