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Where Do We Go from Here?

Gözde Serbest · Nancy Butler · Ali Abbas · Miloš Todorović

Delise O'Meally
The Power to Change the World

Kemal Köprülü
What Is Wrong?

Maya Wang
Turkey Needs to Respond to China's Crimes against Humanity

Tuba Torun
The Istanbul Convention Keeps Alive

Mehmet Yegin & Salim Çevik
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Foreword

Following up on the Winter 2020/21 edition, TPQ's Spring 2021 issue continues with the series of debates that we hope to ignite on "systems in decay," and the shifting world order at large. On that note, this edition inquires, "Where Do We Go from Here?"—exploring the deteriorating state of human rights across the globe, from social injustices in the US, to Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, and to the Chinese government's growing repression of Uyghurs in Xinjiang. Our authors also discuss how the US's foreign policy is evolving, along with its societal values and political principles, amid ongoing tensions within both its borders and outside of them.

In this special issue, Delise O'Meally, CEO of the Institute for Sport and Social Justice, explains how sports can serve as a social institution, one especially suited to spur systemic change in society. O'Meally analyzes the role sports has played in the fight against racial injustice, starting in 1968 when John Carlos and Tommie Smith raised their fists at the Olympics, to 2020, when US sports leagues showed solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. While underlining the universality of sports, O'Meally illustrates how sports, with its shared values of teamwork, unity, mutual aspirations, and respect, can advance positive social change.

As part of a multi-part contribution, TPQ Publisher, Kemal Köprülü delves further into the systemic problems, including corruption, biased media, and the lack of accountability, that plague American politics. While reflecting on US policies and their domestic and international ramifications in modern history, Köprülü asserts that America is far from being "back"—and, in fact, is at its weakest. As the specter of a rising China and its connections to Democratic politicians and donors becomes increasingly apparent, Köprülü argues containing China during Biden's presidency will be impossible. Despite their efforts to divert attention away from China and toward Russia, Democrats' corrupt acts will come back to haunt them, Köprülü writes—especially ahead of the 2022 and 2024 elections.

Noting that the Chinese government's oppression of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslim peoples has reached unprecedented levels since late 2016, Maya Wang, senior researcher on China at Human Rights Watch, highlights that the Chinese government has committed, and continues to commit, crimes against humanity in Xinjiang. Wang points to how the response—or lack, thereof—of Muslim-majority countries has been particularly disappointing, including Turkey, whom many had hoped would take a clearer stance against these human rights abuses. However, Wang notes, it is not too late. The Turkish government still has the chance to adopt

concrete policies both domestically and internationally, including through individual sanctions, trade restrictions, and measures, to protect the Uyghur and Turkic diaspora in Turkey.

An important acknowledgement goes to our premium corporate sponsor Ford. In addition, we would like to thank our online sponsor, and the sponsor of this issue, Monaco Economic Board. We would also like to express our appreciation for our media partner, Duvar English, and for the continuing support of our other sponsors: Gordon Blair, Şekerbank GYO, TEB, and Turcas.

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THE POWER TO CHANGE THE WORLD

The United States has seen a transformation in the past 12 months, possibly the beginning of a sea change around race and culture. The very visible and tragic death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police shook the nation to its core, and prompted an unprecedented national outcry. In the months that followed, amidst the social vacuum created by the pandemic, sport emerged as a present and prominent voice for change. In many ways, we have always known that sport has an inherent power to bring people together, and that athletes, because of their celebrity status, have a platform from which to influence others. What we saw last summer was a collective and unified movement by a large sector of the entire sports enterprise that placed issues of racial oppression and inequality in the center of American consciousness. Systemic change begins with awareness, and sport is shining a bright light on this racial reckoning.

.

Delise O'Meally*

TPQ
Spring 2021

* Delise O'Meally is the CEO of the Institute for Sport and Social Justice based in Orlando, Florida.

Sport plays a significant role in American culture, and continues to have broad appeal at all levels of society. We all have some connection to sport, whether it's recreational activity with family and friends, elite sport participation, or even just fandom. Sport creates an environment where people engage with others despite perceived differences. We collectively share the joy of victory and we all understand the pain of defeat. This unity and common purpose opens the door for greater understanding and appreciation of the challenges others may face and unites us in our approach to positive solutions. Of course even as we extol these virtues of sport, we must acknowledge that discrimination still exists. In sports we find some of the harshest gender-shaming language, and sports at the leadership level remains mostly homogenous. But even still, we believe that sport has the power to change the world. Sport is a language that everyone understands. The key is to extrapolate the positive aspects of sport like teamwork, unity, mutual aspiration, and respect, and through these common themes, begin to have the meaningful conversations that advance positive systemic change.

Sport and Social Justice

The power of sport is also seen through the impact and influence of athletes at all levels of the game. In iconic moments in history, athletes have stood in support of a cause, or in opposition to injustice and oppression. In 1968, when John Carlos and Tommie Smith raised their fists on the Olympic medal podium in Mexico City, it shocked the world, a world that largely was ignorant of the struggles that faced African Americans and other minority groups in the United States. This action created an international furor and damaged their post-Games professional careers.[1] Questions were asked. How dare they use this moment to advance their personal agendas, how ungrateful to the opportunities given to them to train and excel in their sport? Almost 50 years later when former NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick took a knee to protest racial injustice, some of these same sentiments were repeated.

Kaepernick began his peaceful protest in 2016 by remaining seated during the playing of the national anthem at a pre-season game. A photo tweeted by a fan magazine gained national attention and Kaepernick explained that he was protesting racial injustice and police violence against people of color. In his own words: "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color." "[T]his is bigger than football, and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way. There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder."[2]

[1] Erin Blakemore, "How the Black Power Protest at the 1968 Olympics Killed Careers," *History.com*, 22 February 2018, https://www.history.com/news/1968-mexico-city-olympics-black-power-protest-backlash

[2] Steve Wyche, "Colin Kaepernick explains why he sat during national anthem," *NFL*, 27 August 2016, https://www.nfl.com/news/colin-kaepernick-explains-why-he-sat-during-national-anthem-0ap3000000691077

Kaepernick's protest inspired other athletes to make similar gestures during pre-game anthems throughout the rest of the season, including kneeling, linking arms, raising a fist, or in some cases returning to the locker room while the anthem was being played. These peaceful protests continued into the 2017 NFL season, and gained the attention of the nation's highest office. Former US President Trump took aim at these athletes calling for them to be fired. In the ensuing years, Kaepernick remained unemployed and has been subjected to racial slurs and death threats.

In early 2018, NBA Superstar LeBron James was publicly reprimanded by a television journalist who suggested that he should keep his political commentary to himself, and "shut up and dribble." James had 41 million Twitter followers and 36 million Instagram followers at the time, and responded with an Instagram post entitled "I am more than an athlete," and a statement that generated the hashtag #wewillnotshutupanddribble. The reaction to this exchange was swift and massive with basketball heavyweights like NBA Commissioner Adam Silver and legendary player Bill Russell commending James on his leadership and positive activism. On the other side of the dialogue were those claiming that James had overstepped, and that his sole and singular purpose should be to entertain.

> *"Today we are seeing a significant increase in the impact and influence of athletes at all levels of the game."*

Basketball legend Kareem Abdul Jabbar in his 2016 book *Writings on the Wall* attempted to explain these negative reactions, noting that America has always had a complicated relationship with its athletes. Jabbar, an athlete activist since the 1960s, goes on to say that:

> [W]hen it comes to Game Day, athletes are warriors whose acrobatic actions on the court or field are revered by millions, emulated by children, lionized in living rooms and bars. Their faces are on clothing, their likenesses on video games. But when it comes to Election Day, or any other day that involves expressing personal opinions about social or political issues, athletes are relegated to a locker room ghetto and told to keep their politics private. Financially, mixing sports and politics is bad for business. Fans want to indulge in the escapism of the sport without the heavy baggage of real life interfering...[3]

[3] Kareem Abdul Jabbar, *Writings on the Wall: Searching for a New Equality Beyond Black and White* (New York: Liberty Street, 2016) p. 115.

Today we are seeing a significant increase in the impact and influence of athletes at all levels of the game. Much of this is due to the high level of engagement and immediacy of social media. The byproduct of this engagement is that athletes, especially at the elite levels, have the ability to influence the business community which then strikes at the funding source. There is a growing recognition of the power of their voices, and their ability to have a positive impact on society. A recent Nielsen study showed that more than 70 percent of sports fans supported athlete activism and believed that teams and league should actively support athlete protests and initiatives on race-related matters. 70 percent of sports fans believe the teams should develop marketing campaigns supporting diversity; and 77 percent believe brands are more powerful when they partner with sports organizations to drive social change.[4]

Today's Movement

The year 2020 brought with it stirrings of hope for a new decade, despite an election year in the United States that was already proving to be highly emotional and contentious. Unknown to most, the virus with which we were all soon to be well acquainted had started its insidious spread across the world. As the pandemic exploded in every corner of the globe, the world as we knew it came to a standstill. Sports became an afterthought as we tried to make sense of this new norm. In the months that followed the lockdown, political unrest dominated our social commentary, and while those tensions simmered, racial injustice erupted once again in the United States.

For more than nine minutes the visible suffering and eventual death of George Floyd on the corner of Chicago Avenue and 38th Street in South Minneapolis streamed around the globe, and brought the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement into the center of the world's consciousness. #BlackLivesMatter was founded in 2013 by three African American women, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the murder of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin. Today, BLM is a member-led global network of more than 40 chapters.[5]

For many, the phrase "Black Lives Matter" reflects a call for acknowledgement and relevance echoing over centuries of oppression and injustice. At its most basic level, it is a call to recognize that the lives of people of color not only in the United States, but around the world, should be valued. However, in the current polarized political climate, the meaning of the phrase has been warped, and the retort "All Lives Matter" has become a verbal weapon to diminish and silence those voices calling for

[4] The Nielsen Company (US), "Promoting Racial Equality in Sports Study," https://www.nielsen.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/07/nielsen-sports-blm-Infographic.pdf

[5] Black Lives Matter, "Black Lives Matter: About," https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/

equity. It is within this social context that actions taken by the NBA, the WNBA, and other players, teams, and leagues over the past summer were so remarkable. When the NBA resumed its 2020 season in a bubble, the world was watching and they saw clearly outlined on the court, the mutual conviction that yes... Black Lives Matter. Athletes also used this platform to share powerful messages on their jerseys and to promote meaningful social justice work. Michelle Roberts, Executive Director of the NBA Players Association, commented on the impact of this collective movement. "This just reminds me that sports in general and basketball in particular, we are an example for the rest of the country to emulate, because in that locker room, there are friendships and bonds that form, notwithstanding race," Roberts said. "They've learned to respect each other as men, and therefore can empathize with each other as men. So, watching white players say Black Lives Matter on the back of their jerseys, it was just amazing."[6]

> *"For many, the phrase 'Black Lives Matter' reflects a call for acknowledgement and relevance echoing over centuries of oppression and injustice."*

In August 2020, following another race-related police shooting, this time in Kenosha, Wisconsin, the Milwaukee Bucks made the decision not to play their scheduled playoff game against the Orlando Magic. This action reverberated throughout the sport world and picked up momentum when the rest of the NBA, the WNBA, Major League Baseball, and others canceled events as well, and stood in solidarity with the African American community that was facing yet another tragedy. Rather than issue a mandate that the games must continue, the leadership of the NBA, the teams, players, and coaches all came together to discuss and determine the best next steps. Out of these conversations came the establishment of a coalition on social justice; repurposing of arenas owned by teams as a safe voting location for those especially vulnerable to COVID-19; advertising sports to promote greater civic engagement; and an NBA Foundation that would focus on economic empowerment in the Black community.

The NBA and WNBA certainly are case studies for the positive role of sport in shaping culture and society. The NFL also has been extremely active in recent months, with a markedly different approach than was seen during Kaepernick protests. When

[6] Marc J. Spears, "'Black Lives Matter people': How the NBA's social justice efforts dominated the season," *The Undefeated*, 12 October 2020, https://theundefeated.com/features/how-the-nba-social-justice-efforts-dominated-the-season/

the NFL resumed its season last August, players and teams protested in various ways, including kneeling during the national anthem, words of power written on cleats, and the phrase "End Racism" stenciled on the field. We also saw individual sport athletes like Japanese tennis star Naomi Osaka take a very personal stand on the issues, wearing seven different face masks for the duration of her 2020 US Open Tennis Championship run to ensure that the nation does not forget the names of people killed by police brutality.

At the university level, young people throughout history, have been strong and prominent as activists and catalysts for social change. From the Freedom Riders and lunch counter sit-ins during the Civil Rights movement to more recent activism, many students have taken a stand against discrimination, inequity, and injustice. According to data gathered in 2020 by the Ross Initiative in Sports for Equality (RISE), US college and university athletes, as well as coaches overwhelmingly believe racism is a concerning issue in the country and a large majority are willing to be active as sport leaders in order to address it.[7]

Recently the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport in partnership with MarketCast Research, Analytics and Data Science, conducted a survey to determine the current impact of athlete activism. Questions focused on how fans react to athlete activism, what forms of activism are fans most receptive to, and supportive of, and what is the business case for sport properties and brands to support athlete activism. These data show growing support for social justice activism by players as well as sport leagues, with a majority of fans across multiple leagues supporting athlete activism and the role of teams and leagues in social responsibility.[8]

How Sports Teams and Leagues Can Use Their Platforms

Social justice activism at the organizational level requires leadership that includes moral courage. Moral courage allows the team or league to stand behind actions for moral reasons even when the outcome is unknown or appears to be negative. It is the strength to stand on the right side of an issue despite negative ramifications. In 2005, the NCAA took a stand on the use of stereotypical sports mascots and images of indigenous people at NCAA championship events. At the time, the decision was derided by some as "political correctness" and an overreach on the part of the governing body. However, the NCAA stayed the course and now almost 20 years later, we have begun to see substantive change in the professional sport world with the Washington football team and the Cleveland baseball team making a change.

[7] Ross Initiative in Sports for Equality, "RISE College Athletics Survey on Racism and Athlete Activism," https://rise-towin.org/college-survey/index.html

[8] MarketCast, "Athlete Activism Study," https://marketcast.com/athlete-activism-study-download/

An organization finds the moral courage to tackle these issues through its culture and values. Most organizations, and certainly sport organizations tout diversity, inclusiveness, equity, sportsmanship, and other ideals as core to their collective belief systems. These values form the basis for corporate social responsibility and social activism.

> *"We all have a responsibility to increase our knowledge exponentially, to understand history and how it contributes to current social dynamics."*

Nelson Mandela once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Education is key to the goal of developing a consistent baseline knowledge and understanding, with all operating from the same prism. We all have a responsibility to increase our knowledge exponentially, to understand history and how it contributes to current social dynamics. A commitment to broad-based, ongoing education around these topics will clear the path for greater understanding and support of these issues that, for some, may not have a personal impact. Looking again at the NBA as an example, the league has more than 70 percent African American players, however NBA team ownership is not diverse with only four non-white majority owners of 30 teams. For most of these owners, the issue of race-related police brutality is something they are not likely to face. How then do they relate to the realities faced by so many athletes on their teams? How then can they empathize, and support actions intended to address these issues? Education helps to bridge this gap and creates a level of trust and community from which an organization can then leverage its resources to support athletes in these social causes.

The Institute for Sport and Social Justice

The Institute for Sport and Social Justice has a long history of social justice work in the world of sport, dating back to the late 1980's. We work in three key areas. We are educators, advocates, and researchers and, over the years, we have developed award-winning programs that focus on diversity, inclusion, equity and belonging, as well as gender-based violence and leadership development.

In sport, the huddle is a powerful symbol of togetherness, a place where teammates convene to reinforce their union, to challenge and support each other, and to communicate strategy. Based on this theme, our educational programming is called "Huddle

Up," which for us is a call to come together and a call to action. Our "Huddle Up for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging" program focuses on building community and trust while embracing vulnerability as a leadership skill. We introduce the topic of privilege in a manner that invites participants to step into the conversation rather than retreat to a defensive posture. We discuss the power of language, the power of symbolism, unconscious bias and allyship, equality vs. equity, and empower participants to understand how privilege, bias, discrimination, and stereotypes can create an unwelcome environment. Our "Huddle Up to End Gender Violence" program addresses the full continuum of abusive behaviors and empowers participants to understand how misogynistic language, sexual harassment, gendered bullying, sexual assault, rape, and domestic violence are linked together.

As advocates, we are a voice for positive change through the power of sport. Our "Shut-Out Trafficking" program raises awareness on university campuses and communities across the nation about human trafficking in all its forms. Our "Invisible Women in Sport" podcast highlights the journeys of women of color in sport and amplifies their voices. We recognize that we are at an inflection point, a place in history where what we do now can determine whether we actually see systemic change in our nation. This moment demands that we act. It demands that we work together to build community and trust, that we have the strength and the courage to be vulnerable around these issues, to show up and be seen. To understand how privilege, whether its race, gender, heterosexual, religion, cis privilege, can sometimes blind those who have it, and destroy those who do not.

Finally, we are researchers. Along with our sister organization, the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sports, we conduct quantitative research that provides annual comparison data around race and gender in sport, as well as graduation data in the university sport space. We also do qualitative work in the organizational culture space, specifically programming that combines qualitative research, strategic planning, and education relative to "Diversity Equity Inclusion and Belonging," and that provides the benchmarking as well as goal setting and training needed to move the needle. One of the outcroppings of the tragedies of summer 2020 has been an increase in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion positions in universities and professional sports across the country. While this is very positive, many are starting from scratch to build the framework for sustainable change. This is our work.

Over the past several years we have impacted all the major US professional sport leagues, the NCAA, over 300 universities, including conference-wide partnerships; over 200 high schools; all branches of the US military; and the Australian Army. We also develop programming for youth, and through a partnership with the US

Department of State, we have worked with coaches and youth from more than 15 countries. For us, this is not a short-term mission, we are in it for the long haul, and we show up every day, trying to make a difference, one organization at a time, one person at a time, one conversation at a time.

Concluding Remarks

In the words of Cesar Chavez, "Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot un-educate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore." Racism and social injustice in all its forms must be eradicated from our society. Sport as a social institution, one that is uniquely positioned and universally embraced, can help to change the world. The power of sport is seen not only in its ability to bring people from varying backgrounds together, but in its inherent significance and influence in our culture and society.

WHAT IS WRONG?

While delving further into the systemic issues such as corruption, biased media, and lack of accountability that have been plaguing the American political system, this article, the second of a multi-part article, argues that the Biden administration's policies in the next four years will have irreparable repercussions for the US and global community alike. America is far from being "back"—and, in fact, is at its weakest. With the specter of a rising China and its ties to Democratic politicians and donors becoming increasingly visible, containing China during Biden's presidency will be impossible. Despite their efforts to divert attention away from China and toward Russia, Democrats' corrupt acts will come back to haunt them—especially ahead of the 2022 and 2024 elections.

Kemal Köprülü*

TPQ
Spring 2021

* Kemal Köprülü is the Publisher of Turkish Policy Quarterly (TPQ).

Turkey has been isolated over the past decade by international powers, along with regional allies, with the purpose of getting things done in its neighborhood—without Turkey. Now, in this new decade, China faces similar international isolation. A US-led group of countries has been challenging China on Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Xinjiang, which culminated in late 2020, when former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo properly declared the atrocities against Uyghurs a "genocide." If Pompeo had four full years, his successes would have been even greater. This international pressure on China, led passionately by Pompeo, was the proper measure to take given China's dismal record of—and complete disregard for—human rights. With such serious human rights violations, territorial advances, and, not to mention, the 3-million-plus death count from coronavirus worldwide, it is critical that China comes clean to the world now more than ever.

I understand what the end game here for China was. And now that Joe Biden is in office, it will be impossible to contain China. Every country will be weakened psychologically first by this worldwide health disaster caused by China. There must be a relentless international effort to research exactly what happened. It is the primary responsibility of Biden and the Democrats in Congress to find out and tell the world. But this is not going to happen, as Biden does not seem to care about this issue. Democrats are instead thinking about and working toward their new objective—to destroy Trump in 2024. It is going to become much more difficult now since Trump was right about everything he said about the lab-based origins of the coronavirus. This lethal virus was deliberately weaponized by the CCP and unleashed on the world population. Until China can prove otherwise, the world must find them guilty until proven innocent. Trump had clearly said they had evidence to back these claims. Although Pompeo had started a very thorough investigation at the State Department to find out the facts, Biden stopped this. After years of deceit and lies on every issue possible, I would not be surprised if Democrats had information about the virus before the US government did.

It is clear to me that Democrats, China, and billionaires colluded to bring down Trump. Democrats and China have been colluding on many different fronts since 2010, when Obama made Biden his "China czar" for his Southeast Asia-China pivot, which later morphed into this most critical venture to destroy Trump. Although we are learning many facts every single day, there are still many more waiting to be uncovered. Sometimes it is difficult to decipher the lies, but lies are just not sustainable. Democrats lied about everything regarding Russia for five years and deliberately hid everything with regard to China for over one decade—the ones who had a part in this charade must be nervous now. If Republicans are searching for

a simple way to take full advantage here, going forward, they should immediately center the entire theme of their election campaign on this Democratic-China collusion funded by billionaires. China was not a country with high standing in the American public eye before the pandemic, and now has certainly lost whatever credibility it had. Republicans should expand on this platform to take control of the House in 18 months, leaving Biden and his leftists powerless.

"With such serious human rights violations, territorial advances, and, not to mention, the 3-million-plus death count from coronavirus worldwide, it is critical that China comes clean to the world now more than ever."

Just one of the Democrats' lies to the public was that Trump did not allow Dr. Anthony Fauci to do his job, thereby causing the virus to spread and kill more people. It turned out through Fauci's emails that then-Vice President Pence, who was in charge of the Coronavirus Task Force, never interfered with Fauci's work. Fauci should resign from office, as the exposed emails have clearly shown that he lied to the US Congress regarding the funding for gain-of-function research. Furthermore, Facebook tried to prevent public discourse around theories that supported the Wuhan lab leak on purpose. Both Zuckerberg and Gates are in many of the emails, proactively involved with Fauci and his position on the virus. Why were they involved in such a manner? What do they both have to gain from trying to control and influence Fauci? Democrats purposely exploited Fauci for their political strategy, to turn the American deaths from the virus into public rage to bring down Trump. Because of Fauci's negligence, the world will never find out the true origins of the coronavirus, as the CCP has had over 18 months to destroy any evidence whatsoever. But Democrats brainwashed their people into believing otherwise.

Many across the Democrat landscape, especially people in the media, should lose their jobs over their duplicity. Not only did everything Trump said about the coronavirus turned out to be correct, his initiative to combat the virus, Warp Speed, turned into a world-wide phenomenon, saving countless lives. These facts alone should entice people who did not vote for Biden with any conviction to vote Republican next time. The number one issue for Americans in the 2020 elections was the pandemic, and now, with the world slowly recovering, I am sure people will want their votes back. Trump recently called on China to pay 10 trillion dollars in "reparations"

for the American deaths they are responsible. World leaders should seize on this statement immediately and turn it into a continuous international campaign to hold the CCP accountable. The US leg of the campaign should be a bi-partisan effort led by Trump, as the de-facto leader of the Republican Party. Trump has no fear of China, and is not compromised in any manner with regard to China as Biden and the Democrats are.

The Path to Presidency: Trump vs. Biden

When Trump first started to float the idea of seriously running for president in 2015 among 20 other Republican candidates, the political consensus was that his wealth, and the fact that he could finance his own campaign without the traditional need to fundraise, would provide a major advantage for him. As I mention in the first part of this article, Trump did not fundraise haphazardly as every Republican traditionally had to do to maintain their candidacy. In fact, Trump never took his yearly salary with regard to the Presidency and donated all of his earnings to different charities.

During the pandemic, according to Forbes, Trump lost one billion dollars in personal wealth, a portion of this resulting from real estate value losses in New York City due to the city's devaluation and demise. Many billionaires passed him during this time: Jeff Bezos is now the richest man in America with a net worth of 177 billion dollars. It would be interesting research for someone to discover how much Democratic billionaires such as Bezos spent during 2016-2020 to destroy Trump, and to find out where they are all now compared to four years ago. Under Bezos, the Washington Post was purposely skewed toward destroying Trump. During those four years, Bezos made billions all while ruthlessly destroying small businesses. Trump, who stood up for small businesses and the working class in America, was directly targeted by Bezos. If The Post had to be shut down tomorrow, Bezos would not lose any sleep as this newspaper, for him personally, is very much a small business considering his vast new worth. Small business owners must be aware that the many small businesses Trump tried to keep alive with his policies during 2020 shut down because of Bezos.

Democrats were caught off guard when Trump was elected in November 2016. As they were out of position, they made senior-level decisions to protect themselves of any possible fallout from the Chinese espionage and corruption within the party, especially in California. People in Washington, D.C. should remember the Cold War years, when espionage was everywhere. Tracking and exposing double agents was a meticulous process that took years, sometimes decades, to conclude. Today, similar dynamics are being unearthed between the US and China. For at least five

years, especially 2010-2015, China had the Democrats at its mercy, and probably have a number of dossiers about Democratic politicians and maybe even some of their billionaire donors. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why billionaires are giving billions to Biden to destroy Trump and keep the world focus on Russia's lies and deceit, where there is absolutely nothing to find.

"There are roughly 25 billionaires like this running the Democrats today and thus controlling America."

Gates is one of these primary billionaire Democrat donors along with Bezos. Gates, who had a falling out in public with his wife, Melinda, had a very peculiar relationship with Jeffrey Epstein, who normally would have been in this Democrat donor class if he were alive and still free. Every prominent Democrat who had ties with Jeffrey Epstein has lied about their relationship. Although Bill Gates denied having any business relationship or friendship with Epstein, it turns out that they even visited then-Chairman of the Nobel Committee Thorbjørn Jagland together to help Gates win a Nobel Peace Prize. Perhaps Gates was fascinated that Obama received the Nobel Peace Prize without doing anything.

There are roughly 25 billionaires like this running the Democrats today and thus controlling America. Their billions are all tied to China. Michael Bloomberg, when asked about his media empire in China, replied that they followed Chinese rules and regulations to be able to continue their services. The common denominator for Biden is that as long as the focus continues on Russia, and not on China, he and the billionaires will all win. Most of these billionaires happen to reside in New York, California, and Seattle. All these areas are suffering now due to corruption and incompetence. They simply do not see California failing as a state because Silicon Valley will only prosper more. This is why Silicon Valley was about to receive 140 million dollars from the first trillion-dollar bonanza stimulus—for Biden to feed his donors and help complete their 6.9 billion dollar subway system by 2030.[1] In 2030, none of these people will even care about what America or the world looks like. They will be entirely in their own little bubble.

If these billionaires donated these amounts to Democrats for the last few years to

[1] Mallory Moench and Tal Kopan, "Silicon Valley BART extension axed from federal stimulus bill after Republican protests," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 2 March 2021, https://www.sfchronicle.com/politics/article/Silicon-Valley-BART-extension-nixed-from-federal-15995345.php

destroy Trump, why cannot they just pay for their own subway system? Why should the Silicon Valley subway system be paid with taxpayer's money? The Center of Responsive Politics reported that the amount of dark money in the 2020 elections surpassed well over one billion dollars, an absurd amount that set records.[2] The majority of this dark money was spent by unaccountable amounts to help Biden win and to destroy Trump. While liberal groups donated 514 million dollars to Biden, 200 million dollars went to an intriguing Republican coalition of donors, most of which were used against Trump. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg donated 350 million dollars very astutely in 47 states where he knew Democrats needed help in destroying Trump.[3]

Trump received only 25 million dollars, which is another reason why Americans should be thankful that Trump had personal wealth and never had to give these billionaires the time of day even once. Republican states, led by Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, have changed their election laws so that billionaires like Zuckerberg cannot buy the elections with their dark monies. DeSantis, whose new election laws have gained traction nationwide, has dubbed this money "Zuckerbucks." "Zuckerbucks" have now been exposed monetarily and, subsequently, nullified in all Republican-led states. As I have underlined, this is a clear indication that Big Tech and Facebook are essentially political action committees that have no transparency or political boundaries. The political system under their weight will continue to collapse and break apart until the laws are changed. When you consider the daily deceit, continuous lies, and election fraud that took place for five years, it is simply amazing that the Democrats were only able to win narrowly by 47,000 votes. I am certain that this fact alone makes the Democrats and their media insecure and nervous.

According to the same report by the Center of Responsive Politics, Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell received more than 85 million dollars from the Senate Republican Leadership's dark money of 125 million dollars. His only goal in life is to maintain his status as a lifetime politician, which has amassed him a fortune, and his ties to China that contribute to his wealth. But shockingly for McConnell, right after all this happened, the entire Republican base, which happens to be loyal to Trump and who they know fights for their issues, went ballistic. Everyone started attacking him. Trump came out publicly and bashed McConnell, calling him weak and hopeless. Trump was correct in his assessments.

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[2] Anna Massoglia and Karl Evers-Hillstrom, "'Dark money' topped $1 billion in 2020, largely boosting Democrats," *OpenSecrets*, 17 March 2021, https://www.opensecrets.org/news/2021/03/one-billion-dark-money-2020-electioncycle/

[3] Amistad Project, "Amistad Project: Time To Fully Unmask Mark Zuckerberg's $350 Million Funnelled For Election Administration And The Motivation Behind It," 28 October 2020, https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/amistad-project-time-to-fully-unmask-mark-zuckerbergs-350-million-funnelled-for-election-administration-and-the-motivation-behind-it-301161751.html

"Just as Obama knew Biden was a very weak VP, and would never challenge him politically or intellectually, Biden knows quite well that Kamala Harris is extremely weak."

Trump had appointed McConnell's wife, Elaine Chao, as Secretary of Transportation in his Cabinet, which is not some small gesture. When McConnell asked Trump for his endorsement before the election, Trump did so reluctantly, because Trump understood that McConnell was a typical member of the swamp. The Democratic dark money machine attacked him and Kentucky, but McConnell survived with Trump's endorsement and, in return, gave a devastating speech about 6 January and how Trump endangered the Capitol with his words. McConnell knew well what he was doing and did not need Trump going forward because his party would come to the normal senses of the swamp and protect him. He came very close to voting to impeach Trump but withheld his vote. The base of the party vilified everyone who voted against both impeachments, or made derogatory remarks on the mainstream media. It is not too difficult to figure out who the true swamp members are when you have Mitch McConnell, Chuck Schumer, and Nancy Pelosi uttering the exact same things. They are all tied together politically. While Trump was assisting in his political goals, McConnell was ready to jump on the "Destroy Trump" train along with Democrats and billionaires. McConnell probably figured that if someone as weak as Joe Biden—who he knows very well and worked with for decades—is able to become president, he might be able to reach the White House one day as well.

Joe Biden's path to presidency was not a particularly smooth one, however. His candidacy was hampered by Obama's initial reluctance to endorse him. Biden must detest Obama for this rebuff similar to how Jill Biden had detested Kamala Harris for criticizing Joe Biden's civil rights record in the Democratic primaries. Just as Obama knew Biden was a very weak VP, and would never challenge him politically or intellectually, Biden knows quite well that Kamala Harris is extremely weak. Every time Harris takes a step forward, Biden will force her several steps back—like when he surprisingly appointed her as the "border czar" for illegal immigrants streaming into the country at a record pace. Everyone knows that Harris wishes to succeed Biden, and become President Harris. Biden knows this as well, which is evident from his announcement to run for re-election, something no newly elected president has done so early. A President Harris would be truly tragic for the US and the entire world.

The Corrupt Inner-Workings of the Democratic Party

In some nations, when a corrupt political party or coalition is voted out unexpectedly, all their past misconducts are usually—or, attempted to be —covered up. On their way out, politicians tend to destroy everything that will incriminate them as a pre-emptive measure against investigations. This is exactly what happened with the Democrats in November 2016. Many of the party's most corrupt politicians, who are also some of the most incompetent ones, come from California, and it is not difficult to sense how anxious they all are.

Democrats managed to keep Hunter Biden and the CCP business dealings out of the spotlight until 14 October 2020, when the New York Post's Twitter account was blocked by Twitter for fake news. The reason this story came out is because the New York Post decided to take serious risks at dangerous times. Had they decided to do the opposite, nobody would have known about the laptop. As time reveals new information, new disturbing facts about Hunter's laptop are also emerging. On the other hand, Democrats' efforts, especially those of Eric Swalwell and Adam Schiff, to single out Trump's children and son-in-law, force them to testify for long periods, and bully them into revealing information to use against Trump also failed miserably. Then the Mueller report came out again, empty and baseless. It was a catastrophe for Pelosi and gang. They had no facts to hold onto and feed the public whatsoever.

The partisan and obedient media never covered the evidence about the Democratic officials who were compromised and flagged by the FBI from 2010-2015. The American public does not know what happened with China during Obama's presidency yet there should have been five years of breaking news and international coverage. Since the FBI does not have the authority to inform the public about such fallouts, nothing came out despite their knowledge of what was going on. I now understand why ex-FBI Chief James Comey came out in 2016 about Hillary Clinton's 340,000 emails on a private email server. Using a private server is not legal for any senior government official, let alone a secretary of state. Clinton was running for president at the time and was hence devastated by the FBI's investigation. The FBI, probably due to internal pressures, had to close their investigation soon after though. Comey asked then-Attorney General, Loretta Lynch, to open a special prosecutor case but she refused. Lynch had recently been appointed by Obama to replace Eric Holder.

Obviously, Obama would never have gone for re-opening this investigation, which would have hurt Clinton's chances severely. When Lynch refused this request, Comey

chose to reopen the case right before the election because New York prosecutors received inside information from the FBI. Instances where someone within the government defies the chain of command to leak information, while the party in power is pushing for the subject's election, rarely happens in US politics. During Watergate, the FBI had fed inside information to The Post. We found out that the secret informant, "Deep Throat," was a senior-level FBI official only many years later. At the time, however, Nixon had already won his reelection with a landslide so the circumstances were different. In a way, what happened with Nixon and Watergate is similar to what happened with the Clinton case, but this situation was much more worse than Watergate. Members of the entire Democratic establishment brainwashed the American people for five years in lockstep with one another.

> *"Those deemed leaders in society should be ashamed of themselves as Cuomo's corrupt, immoral, and incompetent acts continue to wreak havoc."*

The FBI was so enthralled by Trump's Russia collusion research and lies that someone probably understood that all this was fake, with weak and unsubstantiated sources on one side and the real and true Clinton emails on the other. These emails were found on the laptop of Anthony Weiner, a disgraced Democratic Congressman who had to resign, and subsequently went to prison, after being caught soliciting sex from underage girls. Unsurprisingly, he is from New York, where Democrats like to hide their corrupt politicians, including Andrew Cuomo. Weiner is also the former husband of Huma Abedin, who was the leader of Clinton's brain trust. As I mentioned in the first part of this article, New York, like California and Illinois, is a state where Democrats have dangerously immense, unchecked powers that they utilize without suffering any electoral repercussions, much like authoritarian regimes.

Cuomo should have resigned or been impeached by now with the power of the #MeToo movement. But this successful movement has been put on hold for the sake of the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM). BLM is so convenient that it can attack any issue that it wants to at any time and tie that issue to race and "racist America." Democrats believe that they are getting away with all of this but, in reality, it is backfiring. BLM is becoming a dark stain in society and taking the Black Movement backwards. The State Department announcing that US embassies around the world can fly BLM flags is truly a tragic decision. As happens frequently in Black history, the wrong people come forth and take advantage of the situation for

all the wrong reasons. BLM will be—and currently is—no exception.

The struggle for women's rights will also suffer due to the wane of the #MeToo movement. This is playing out right now in front of the entire world in New York. Even though consolidating victories of the movement would help efforts to advance rights, powerful women in the Democratic Party, including Nancy Pelosi, Hillary Clinton, and Stacy Abrams, have stayed silent about the allegations against Andrew Cuomo. These powerful women cannot call for Cuomo's resignation, as their party protects and covers up for their corrupt people. As a result, Cuomo has been able to dig deep with the public support of Chris Cuomo and CNN. Those deemed leaders in society should be ashamed of themselves as Cuomo's corrupt, immoral, and incompetent acts continue to wreak havoc. When you have double standards across the board on every societal issue possible, you cannot have credibility on any issue at all. Democrats only care about the Black women and white women who vote for them. This will prevent any kind of societal consolidation of the women's movement, and will be one of the most divisive cultural issues in America, causing irreparable damage.

Moreover, Cuomo, who has failed at every level of leadership, ironically secured a 5.1-million-dollar book deal on leadership during the COVID-19 crisis. Although Democrats consistently set new lows for sub-standard behaviors, you are in a truly peculiar league when, as governor, you are able to make money off deaths that resulted from your decisions. Since Trump is still around, the Democrats all know they will need Cuomo to help bully Trump. Cuomo will become exactly like Swalwell and Schiff, and all three will spew identical lies on disastrous media channels every day. They will be joined by Trump-hating Republicans like Liz Cheney who are losing their powers due to the shift in the base of the party. In six months, Trump has already consolidated his power over the party and has brought down Cheney—who challenged him directly —and weakened McConnell among others in the traditional Republican brass. Trump-endorsed candidates have an unbelievable winning percentage and rarely lose.

Trump must have learned something from his business career that he seems to be applying successfully to politics. Republicans are primed for increasing their Black, and especially Hispanic, vote with excellent candidates once again in the 2022 elections. Although municipal elections are officially nonpartisan, the Democrat media machine, except for the New York Times, failed to cover the recent mayoral runoff elections in Texas, which featured two heavily Hispanic districts. Republicans won both races, including the district of McAllen, which is a border town that is 85 percent

Hispanic.[4] While Republicans have been steadily gaining a foothold ahead of the 2022 elections, Obama has been railing against them, claiming they are threatening democracy in America. Obama knows very well that Democrats have a huge problem with Hispanics and even Blacks, but what he fails to understand is that this is one reason why Trump was able to restructure and reshape the Republican base, and fully take control ultimately. Obama has himself to thank for this predicament where Democrats have failed to brand Trump a racist and drive voters away from him. With a trajectory heading toward 80+ million votes, Obama is well aware that Trump will be in the perfect position to retake the White House if he runs in 2024 with qualified candidates.

> *"[Democrats] are weakening America's economy and killing its entrepreneurial spirit."*

From 2010 to Today

In November 2016, when Democrats saw the White House slipping away, there had to be decisions made to cover up the Chinese corruption, spying, and dark money funding the party. This is clearly why the Clinton campaign had to immediately finance British ex-intelligence officer Christopher Steele to produce any dirt possible on Donald Trump and Russia. Starting in spring 2016, this was all funded by Paul Singer, another billionaire Democrat who controls the party. Whatever came out of this Steele dossier, CNN and their media mob would immediately attack and turn Trump into a Russian double agent. Every Schiff interview I watched was based on secret and dark information, and their whistle blowers had to be protected so that they would keep to their deceit and lies on Trump. CNN consistently lied to the entire world for four years, and continues to date. To make their lies look relevant, they would play with the topic and include some other whistle blower that they trusted to spew out lies again, just as they did with their coverage of the Trump administration and Russia.

The FBI utilized the misinformation from Steele to start their fake investigation of Trump in June 2016—five months before the election. Republicans had actually already started the search for dirt during the primaries, as they did not want Trump to be their candidate. As a result, they looked for ways to have Trump leave the race.

[4] Reid J. Epstein, "Republicans win two Texas mayoral races, including one in McAllen, which is 85 percent Hispanic," *New York Times*, 7 June 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/07/us/politics/texas-mayor-mcallen-republicans.html

Had something substantial come up, the Republicans would have used this information to prevent Trump's nomination at the Republican National Convention in July 2016. Nonetheless, the FBI was able to tie this investigation to a 2013 Moscow trip Trump took to attend a Miss Universe pageant. The FBI and Clinton, combined with Singer's efforts, took everything from Steele, which was pure lies to create conspiracies against Trump and Russia. During this time, when Obama was still in office, everyone was on board with this starting from Obama, Biden, Clinton, Pelosi, and the Democratic National Committee (DNC). Debbie Wasserman Schultz, who was Chair of the DNC, and a rising star in the party at the time, had to resign in disgrace. Clinton herself is facing an investigation by the Federal Election Commission over these acts that were carried out to destroy Trump.

In January 2017, when Trump took office, Democrat billionaire George Soros funded Daniel Jones, ex-senior aide to Senator Feinstein, to create the Democracy Integrity Project. These funds were funneled to Christopher Steele and Fusion GPS, the company Clinton was using for the same purposes. Before the impeachment process began, Mark Penn, a reputable pollster who worked with President Clinton in the 90's and Hillary Clinton in 2008, explained that conducting something this dangerous would hurt American politics and set bad precedence for administrations and government officials. For years, I followed Penn's polling newsletters, which were always principled and passionate about his craft. In my opinion, someone like Mark Penn would never change his polling so the Democrats or Clinton could come out ahead unfairly without facts. He did not work for Clinton in 2016, and I can imagine why that was the case. All the pollsters got it terribly wrong, as they showed Clinton ahead by 8 to 12 percent, never going below these figures. Democrats, starting from Clinton's people who knew him and his reputation very well, severely vilified Mark Penn. Along with the media, Democrats immediately dubbed him as a traitor to the party. Democrats simply never allow a descent in their ranks, similar to many autocratic parties around the world. The Democrats are not democrats in any manner or respect.

From June 2016 until present day everything has been a Russian-Trump mirage to brainwash people and dismiss the dirty collusions of Democrats and China. US political truths from 2010-2016 vanished and were never reported or analyzed. This entire period needs to be researched by responsible people from around the world who still care about America. I am an independent observer who understands that the failures of America will undermine the world order in many different ways. Democrats are making America and the American people weaker so that everyone embraces their "big government" socialist vision. They will provide free services to anyone who votes for them. They are weakening America's economy and killing its

entrepreneurial spirit. Working hard and earning your way forward does not exist in the Democratic political playbook. They are pushing things like critical race theory, which is teaching young people to hate American history. All you need to do is listen to what they are saying and what they are doing. Almost 600,000 illegal immigrants have entered the US-Mexican border area and are being secretly sent to hundreds of places in America. For what reason could this be possibly happening? It is not difficult to figure out what they are doing. With a resolution, Biden and Democrats have paved the way for the citizenship of at least 11 million illegal immigrants.[5] This number will be much higher in reality, and will only hurt immigrant families and minorities who worked hard and did it the right way. Democrats are deliberately splitting society into two entirely different worlds and mindsets that are incompatible with each another. This is not sustainable and it will break at some critical juncture.

> *"The initial objective to destroy Trump worked temporarily in 2020, but, now, even the NYT has realized that Trump is the strongest candidate going forward—if he runs in 2024, he will certainly surpass 74 million."*

None of the billionaires who own and control the Democratic Party have any business investments in Russia. Nobody will lose any sleep over a potential war with Russia in Ukraine. Plus, it is always good business for defense contractors to make lots of money. Just look at the post-9/11 world of lucrative business opportunities for defense corporations. Biden's new Defense Secretary—Gen. Lloyd J. Austin—comes to the Pentagon directly from the Board of Raytheon. As Trump downsized the forever wars significantly, new wars are, so to speak, necessary. Biden and Austin are not there to continue Trump's ardent efforts to achieve peace and stability. While concealing China's misconducts, it is in billionaires' interest for fake Trump-Russian conspiracies to gain momentum, since most of them are heavily invested in China. What was done here is criminal and people should lose their jobs. The guilty must be convicted and go to prison. Senior Democrats have aligned at the top to become collaborators in lying and deceiving to protect one another and the party. As I have noted earlier, this is just as bad as what Nixon did to the Democrats and everything Democratic during Watergate. The Steele dossier is

[5] Andrea Castillo and Cindy Carcamo, "Biden to offer legal status to 11 million immigrants," *Los Angeles Times*, 20 January 2021, https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-01-20/biden-administration-releases-bill-establishing-pathway-to-citizenship-for-11-million-undocumented-immigrants

comparable to Watergate and, in fact, much worse in my opinion. Watergate was done by one man, Nixon, whom nobody challenged while he controlled everything and bullied everyone in the Republican Party, until it was too late.

Just as Watergate damaged the Republican Party until Reagan came along, Democrats know that this scheme could blow up the moment whistle blowers come out. Perhaps one responsible person in their media world can actually do journalism for once and report on truths instead of lies. When political figures and the media are complicit in lies and continue to double down, it takes a long time for truths to emerge. The New York Times has written an article explaining how the Steele dossier might actually be pure misinformation and lies.[6] If the NYT is writing this now, there must be a reason. The timing of this article, which comes after Trump's election loss, is critical. The NYT is obviously trying to take steps to redeem its terrible reputation; they must have realized that trust is imperative in journalism. No whistle blower would break any major news to your newspaper if they cannot trust you.

Now that Trump is temporarily out of the picture, all of these media groups are struggling for ratings and attention, trying to prevent the bottom from falling out. For over five years, these groups featured fake whistle blowers to brainwash their people. At some point, each group must look at its own interests and will sell out the others accordingly in order to survive, because media standards in America are heading toward the worst levels in history. There must be full restructuring of the entire industry. This is exactly what happened in Turkey after incompetent media groups in the 90's helped bring down media standards tremendously, thereby damaging the public trust in the media. After the public voted out the political parties and leaders that these media groups were intertwined with, shocked and unprepared, these groups ended up destroying each other after 2002. None of these groups exist in Turkey anymore. The same fate awaits the US media landscape now, as they will all be similarly shocked and unprepared. All these foolish media groups that tied their public services and political fortunes to weak and corrupt Democrats will be pulled down by those same people. Today in America, the real whistle blowers need credible groups to be able to bring out the truths. As Democrats are desperate to make sure these truths do not surface, they are threatening individuals. Their media is in freefall that will only worsen as their lies continue. Every responsible media group and individual around the world has to research America since 2009 and strive to discover the truths.

After six years of Bush's lies, Obama's presidency compounded the political

[6] Barry Meier, "Secret Sharers: The Hidden Ties Between Private Spies and Journalists," *New York Times*, 15 May 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/15/business/media/spooked-private-spies-news-media.html

problems of the past decade. 14 years is a long time in US history to lie to the American people and the world. The initial objective to destroy Trump worked temporarily in 2020, but, now, even the NYT has realized that Trump is the strongest candidate going forward—if he runs in 2024, he will certainly surpass 74 million. When you can start from a proud and passionate base of 74 million, growing this number will be easy. Contrary to Trump, Biden's voters are not proud and passionate about him—again, something that terrifies their media and the party leadership. Trump voters know well that everything smelled awful for four years, and that Democrats essentially molested their leader on a daily basis. Republicans can easily recruit many more people and, more importantly, successful candidates to run. With an election won by less than 45,000 votes, a shrinking House majority, and a 50-50 Senate, Biden cannot rule like a fully empowered left-wing radical. These margins are extremely frail and will disappear in November 2022.

> *"The Democrats' ongoing objective is to divert attention away from China and toward Russia as their efforts to brainwash American people continue."*

In addition, voters have Trump's successes of Warp Speed and achieving energy independence for the first time, which has diminished in Biden's first 100 days. Once the American people figure things out, they will want to bring down many Democrats with the next elections in 2022 and 2024. Americans do not like lies and deceit. All you need to do is look at American political history to see that one thing has always happened: the party in power that seeks too much power grabbing, like today, eventually suffers the consequences and gets checked.

Like a well-oiled factory, these decisions made by the most senior Democrats produced five years, and counting, of daily Russian fantasies. Everything the Democrats and their media said or wrote were lies. Everything. Impeachment number one was a Russian hoax. Impeachment number two occurred because they wanted Trump entirely out of the game in 2024. An indictment by Congress therefore would have gone a long way for them. The insurrection was again a figment of their imagination. As I wrote, it was not difficult for me to figure this out right afterwards. Now, suddenly, the facts on the ground about Trump's involvement in the riots have changed. I knew well this was just another set-up and no facts would surface, but the objective is always more critical. What about equating the DC riots to the riots

in 17 cities that Democrats fueled last year? What would the riots in Portland and Chicago be called? Democrats, with their principles of corruption, unaccountability, and impunity, are busy peddling their insurrection lies while there are people sitting in jail without an indictment.

During the Democrat-superheated summer of riots, on 1 June 2020, Trump tried to go to St. John's Church, near the White House, near where there were demonstrators. The media mob said Trump had the US Park Police, who had control over the nearby parks, teargas peaceful protestors so that he could have a photo-op in front of the church. This was the big lie and deceit of the day, as the Inspector General's report in June 2021 has clearly proven. News channels covered this incident for weeks because it fit perfectly into the Democrats' manipulative campaigns of that summer, during which they tried to desperately hide the dangerous riots and keep the attention on Trump. I watched the 2020 election more closely than I have watched anything in my life. Every event Trump had throughout America, especially in the months leading up to 3 November, were very clean and extremely proper. Nothing negative happened, not once—not even when he was touring five cities a day in October 2020. Why in the world would Trump, after this kind of performance during a pandemic-tainted election season, ruin his own record and incite violence in Washington, D.C. on 6 January? All someone with slight common sense has to do is think who would benefit from something like this.

As Trump plans to run for the White House in 2024, all of these lies will be re-packaged and served again. The Democrats' ongoing objective is to divert attention away from China and toward Russia as their efforts to brainwash American people continue. Democrats also have powerful collaborations with the mega institutions that control America, such as Big Tech, which also happens to have strong ties to China. Nobody cares about the means but only the one end. Just like in war, every building possible is destroyed to be able to win. Now you have parts of US cities destroyed from last year's riots. The threat of more destruction is increasing every day as direct political ploys conducted by Democrats. For them, it is business as usual. They have successfully destroyed Los Angeles, New York City, Chicago, Portland, and other cities—so why not continue? No one is held accountable anyway. Portland is a lost city now, yet will anyone hold the Mayor of Portland or Governor of Oregon accountable? Since there was no law and order in Democratic cities last year, they were able to incite fear in the streets and terrorize neighborhoods. Trillion-dollar stimulus bills by Obama and Biden always find their way to the worst run states under Democratic control. Now, Democrats are trying to divide the nation along racial lines and they want uprisings to occur because riots play right into the hands of a party devoid of ideas and principles. This was especially visible when Democratic

Congresswoman Maxine Waters tried her best to incite riots in Minneapolis with her comments during the murder trial for the killing of George Floyd. They thought an imperfect decision by the judge in Derek Chauvin's trial would encourage crowds to take this issue to the streets again.

> *"Due to the damaged state of politics in the US, China will become even more powerful in the next four years."*

Alongside Harris' powerful statements and call for donations to a bail fund, Biden and Harris' muted condemnations of the violence during last year's riots should be noted. They were both terrified that they would have had to sit and watch all the cities burn down again, this time under their watch. This is why Biden said he was praying for the right verdict because he knows he has absolutely no control over America, and that riots would be much worse than the 60's right now. Every active left-wing group in America can claim that they are the reason Biden is in office, starting with BLM and Antifa. Biden is thus vulnerable to manipulation by any kind of group, as he owes the billionaires and every small group in the nation that helped him cross the finish line. This is why trillions of dollars of stimulus bills are being pumped through the system. The very last thing on Biden's and the billionaires' agenda is finding out what happened in China regarding the coronavirus.

Because these powerful people were unable to destroy him in a span of three months, Trump has now fully consolidated his control over the Republican Party according to his vision and is now endorsing candidates for 2022 elections. Biden, billionaires, and their tamed media are once again terrified, as they are trying to revise domestic terrorist norms in accordance with the convenient issue of the day. Trump is their number one white supremacist enemy in America, with 74 million Republican supremacists tagging alongside him. Now until 2024, they will wrap Trump up in white supremacy, insurrection, racism, Russia, and any other apt theme to continue to brainwash their people for another four years. CNN and the rest might want to revise and prioritize the true threats to American companies and individuals as international cyber security threats continue to harm US infrastructure. Cyber security threats, both domestic and international, is clearly America's number one problem. Biden, however, does not take this threat seriously because it does not fit his political objective to destroy Trump in 2024.

Meanwhile, as human smugglers become wealthier every day by the border crisis that Biden has personally created by reversing Trump's policies, a migrant smuggling crisis also looms large over America. Little children are being raped and used as slaves for whatever purpose their smugglers deem fit. There are little kids thrown off the walls that Trump has built but Biden left defenseless. Everyone knows this window is open. Kamala Harris and Democrats are not worried about human smuggling and kids dying, as their only objective is to resettle illegals inside the US borders as soon as possible by the 2022 and 2024 elections to beat Trump again. Everyone who can is approaching the border and throwing their lives in danger for the chance to cross into the US. Republican governors must take things into their own hands and secure their own state borders as long as the Federal Government continues to fail them. Texas Governor Greg Abbott has taken the first step with a "down payment" for the border wall, which other states should follow. This is their responsibility as governors, as nobody in Washington, D.C. lives on the border and knows the situation on the ground. If the US encounters further crises in the next few years due to mass illegal immigration, as with other issues, nobody in the Democratic bureaucracy will be held accountable.

The Democrat media, through Biden's own instruction, is not reporting on what is happening at the border, even though almost 180,000 illegal immigrants crossed, a two-decade record, in April 2021. They must feel like useless fools playing a game. The journalists of these institutions are not allowed to ask questions before giving the question in writing, which resembles the media procedures of autocratic regimes. Since they need new voters in place by the 2022 and 2024 elections, Democrats will destroy the border to realize their plans. Biden is doing nothing to stop this because he is also a part of the ploy. Government officials are quietly escorting illegal aliens throughout America, but nobody knows exactly where, as it is being done secretly and eerily at nighttime so that no witnesses are around. After reports of unaccompanied minors, Tennessean residents have been warning other states to look out for Biden's massive illegal immigrant placements. As I said, I am certain this is all to destroy Republican-run states like Tennessee, Texas, Arizona, and Florida to ensure Democrats win. Americans are waking up slowly to see what is going on but there is no information because everything is being covered up.

Nothing else but power matters for Democrats. I do recall Harris raising her voice at Trump many times for the "kids in cages" but she is not concerned anymore. While appointing her to lead the response to the border crisis, Biden knew very well that Harris had unpleasant words for Trump about the cages at the border. He knew that Harris would not be able to say anything in fear of any journalist with common sense tying it to last year's ugly exchanges. In her first month as VP, this would have

hurt Harris politically; this is why she has done nothing on the border issue. She even put out a statement saying that she was not responsible for the border. In June 2021, five months after taking office, Harris finally found time to go to Guatemala and Mexico to tend to her job. After making a statement in Guatemala telling people not to come to the border, her trip naturally turned into a disaster.

> *"Finding out what happened in Wuhan would place Biden on a solid historical legacy footing in not only America but also the entire globe."*

The Guatemalan President, Alejandro Giammattei, and the press thought she was joking, because she usually laughs through critical issues. Harris however tried to act tough this time, but it backfired. Now everyone in Central and South America as well as the world sees through her insecurities and weaknesses. In June, as soon as Trump announced he would visit the border with Republican leaders, Harris announced her first trip to the border as a counter to Trump. Democrats' preoccupation with Trump has turned extremely dangerous for America because, once again, they are ready to do anything to destroy him. As Harris turned out to be useless on the border, Biden just named her "voter rights czar," which should be quite intriguing. She will undoubtedly fit right in with the Democratic lies regarding voter suppression by Republican governors such as DeSantis. Harris should be able to follow through Joe Biden's lies about voter suppression in Georgia and supply fodder for their media channels. It is truly sad that Harris still has not answered one serious question since she took office.

For Biden, Harris is a lame duck VP just as he was for Obama starting from day one. Obama always looked to find someone better for his second term but settled for Biden as the best of the worst possible Democrats. Obama knows Democrats are weak intellectually and his arrogance is so grand he did not want anyone inside the White House thinking too much. The same thing applies now for Harris; this is why everyone was surprised when Biden chose her. She was the least qualified person in the party that could challenge him. Harris will go down as one of the weakest and most incompetent vice presidents in American history.

The US vis-a-vis China

In April 2021, the Prime Minister of Japan, who was the first international state leader

to visit the new Biden administration, focused on one issue—China. The Korean delegation likewise spent their entire time discussing China's economic warfare threats to the region during their recent visit to the White House. China was the focal point of every major joint problem or regional security issue in both discussions. Due to the damaged state of politics in the US, China will become even more powerful in the next four years. The decrease in international checks and balances on China will help consolidate its position as a global power. As a global power trending upward, China has proven that it can take care of itself. America, on the other hand, is trending downward and will have difficulties creating coalitions regarding China.

In its first bilateral talks with the new administration in Alaska in March 2021, the Chinese Communist Party delegation was aggressive and extremely critical. They accused the US of human rights abuses over racial injustice and utilized BLM as a tool to display American weaknesses. They caught the US delegation led by Tony Blinken off guard and warned the US to stay out of China's internal affairs, as this was a red line for them. They even used Biden's own words about America against America because everyone around the world understands that left-wing Democrats have a serious problem with American history.

For this first high-level bilateral meeting with China, the US was not briefed properly and, consequently, had to turn the two-day affair into a tit for tat, accusing China of grandstanding and focusing on public theatrics and dramatics instead of substance. The reality was that China could have easily bided for more time for their international objective of becoming the world's number one power, but chose not to do so, showing their hand very clearly from the start. Democrats fail to understand that their destructive domestic affairs and ideologies had been witnessed by the entire world. It was clearly in China's interest for Trump to lose and be linked to Russia. Does anyone think that the upper Chinese official thinking does not see what happened and why this occurred? They are aware of the US's every weakness, including the Democrats, and know what their objectives are. If they thought America was truly "back," then this meeting would not have occurred the way it did. Contrary to the US, China has clear red lines that they have been able to dictate. In fact, the Chinese delegation made it clear that the US did not possess the qualifications to speak to China from a position of strength. The entire world saw this. Even CNN and the gang did not have the power to misportray these statements. With Trump gone, and no one to blame, the media had no idea how to handle this. The reporting was skewed and the significance of this first meeting where "America was back in action" supposedly was downplayed. However, Democrats need to realize that there are still international journalists and members of the press who do their jobs properly and try to observe things in an independent manner.

> *"The US cannot afford to lose any more allies."*

The fact that this was happening on the one-year anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic was extremely disappointing. The US delegation should have immediately counter-attacked with data about the outbreak in Wuhan and driven the Chinese delegation into a corner. With almost 4 million dead, the US never made the virus an issue, which I find absolutely astonishing. During the coronavirus pandemic, China doubled down and did not lose one day of sleep. Biden was upset at Trump, because his Chinese friends had been ruffled by the description of the crisis in northwest China as a "genocide." Biden and his team have been trying to figure a way out of Trump's labeling ever since. Since Biden was determined to appease his Chinese friends, he went on CNN with a confusing message about confronting Xi and different cultural norms. If the State Department had not been the one to have made the declaration, reversing this labeling would have been one of Biden's day-one presidential decrees. Instead of challenging Trump on the Uyghur genocide, Biden should have first made a promise and declare it was his duty as US President to find out exactly what happened in Wuhan. But he did not do this. The US president's number one priority for the next four years should be to investigate the origin of the coronavirus. Finding out what happened in Wuhan would place Biden on a solid historical legacy footing in not only America but also the entire globe.

The US, Biden, and Allies

Judging from Biden's first 100-plus days in office, China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, and even the Palestinians are ecstatic that "America is back." However, the reality is that America is much weaker right now than it was under Trump—and it will get much worse. Everyone who is paying attention knows foreign relations are going to get dicey around the world now as problems deepen.

One war already broke out in the Middle East in Biden's first four months. Egypt's General Sisi, who had the respect of both parties, had to negotiate for a cease-fire in the latest conflict between Israel and Hamas. Trump's Abraham Accords had laid a foundation for peace and prosperity in the region, and if Trump had been president, several major countries, perhaps even Saudi Arabia, would have become partners. This is all in the past now, as Biden has lowered expectations down to instability and regression once again for the region. I do not think this will be the last war in the Middle East under Biden, unfortunately. The fact that Biden was negotiating

with Iran for their re-entrance into the nuclear agreement at the same time Hamas and Israel were having a regional war financed by Iran, through its proxy Hamas, is absurd. This is not smart international politics at all. Just as I clearly stated, Biden's team is resurrecting the horrors of Obama's errors, which has also ignited inter-party tensions, including reactions that border on anti-Semitism, during this period. This change in rhetoric emerged in the Obama years, when the former president fueled hatred and polarization in the political debate. Moderate Democrats should come to some sense of stabilization, and understand that the world has no room for American errors anymore. The US cannot afford to lose any more allies.

Meanwhile, Biden has also been maneuvering toward war in Ukraine, an area that he knows very well, against Russia. Biden knows he will receive the support to arm Ukraine with necessary war machinery and have the entire world's attention on Russia and Putin during his four-year term just like Obama had during his second term after Crimea's annexation. Biden called Putin a killer and Putin responded by challenging Biden to debate him. Biden unsurprisingly did not accept the challenge. As Putin used the Obama years to strengthen and consolidate his regional position, particularly with the annexation of Crimea, there is no reason to believe Putin would think or act differently during Biden's presidency. After the G7, Putin and Biden had their first face-to-face meeting. Putin mocked Biden and the demise of America with similar terminology used by the Chinese at the US-China summit. Being deliberately talked down to by Putin and China is truly a disgrace for America. Perception is everything in international politics. Had Trump been president, he would have portrayed strength and neither of these demeaning exchanges with Russia and China would have happened.

Putin, with his sharp political mind, has put Russia back in play in world politics, especially concerning regional issues, in the last 20 years. At the Geneva Summit, similar to what he told NBC in an interview, Putin went on to underline 6 January, and how Biden has politicized that day and imprisoned his political enemies. Biden did not seem too pleased to hear this directly from him and commented about Putin's bad examples regarding US weaknesses and the American demise to the press members that he brought along. The irony here is that the CNN White House correspondent—Kaitlan Collins—who Joe Biden admonished in front of the entire world was the same person responsible for Trump and his fake news stories. Trump had a major exchange with Collins in May 2020 during the elections regarding CDC when she tried to connect Trump's mishandling of the CDC and its director, Robert Redfield, to the delayed rollout of testing. Collins obviously was trying desperately to lead Trump into criticizing the CDC, Fauci, and others so that they could weaponize these lies for their deceits. The Democrat media's only job was to extract words

and body language from Trump and feed these into their daily scripts. This is one of hundreds of cases during the pandemic where they would purposely skew the truths to bring down Trump.

> *"I am suggesting to US officials and European NATO officials that NATO becomes the world's number one protector of freedoms and establishes a global foothold right now while it still can."*

On the opposite political spectrum, in that heated moment in Geneva, Biden told Kaitlan Collins that she was in the "wrong business." As CNN and gang take great pleasure is admitting they were responsible for temporarily getting rid of Trump, there is a huge discrepancy here. Collins cannot be "fake news" for Trump and discredited by Biden at the same time. The moment between Biden and Collins was extremely intriguing, as Biden's press had not asked a single serious question to Biden or Harris in six months. It was a very simple question–why are you so confident that Putin will change his behavior? The first question to Harris was also very plain about her planned visit to the border and she did not appreciate this question. Harris and Biden both lashed out at these different questions. What will happen when people start asking serious questions on all the real different issues that Biden is failing on simultaneously?

The White House has already announced that there is an investigation by US intelligence analyzing the potential fallout from Russia during the 2020 US elections. It is so simple now to read into the Democrat lies and deceits, and here I know Biden is lying again. Even though there was no interference by Russia in the 2016 elections, Biden is determined to keep Russian lies and conspiracies in the public's head. Russia's main real threat to the US is in cyber warfare, where they have been doing whatever they want to since Biden took office. Russian hackers have already hacked into the East Coast's largest oil pipeline, Colonial Pipeline. Playing with national security does not seem to be a problem for Democrats. They seem to think all of this is some kind of game. According to Kyiv, Putin has roughly 100,000 Russian troops training for a possible invasion of Ukraine, in addition to nuclear weapons that are being preparing to be placed in Crimea. Placing nuclear weapons in Crimea is a direct blow to Obama and Biden because Putin annexed Crimea in 2014, as I wrote, while Obama was pivoting to China with Biden.

No country outside of Russia's hinterland sees Russia as a direct threat to their economic viability or to their national security anymore. Simply put, Russia is not a global threat as it was for the majority of the last century when most countries in the world were always concerned and fearful. Besides Russia's neighbors, the countries that are in the most vulnerable positions right now are India, Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, and the Philippines, among others. The US intelligence officials must read the world properly and plan their strategies to counter these dynamics. Trump did absolutely nothing in four years to bait Russia into a regional war. Why is Biden doing the opposite and openly baiting and daring Russia to make a move now? If Putin makes the first move, the world's—and especially the US public's—attention will be on Russia, not China. In essence, Biden is using international politics and very dangerous issues to ensure that Trump does not return to the White House in 2024.

If the US cannot depend on the countries in the Five Eyes intelligence alliance—Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand—across the board on all critical issues going forward, then China will be able to impose its influence on countries based on different strategies and rack up wins. In January 2021, for example, New Zealand did not sign the Five Eyes document that condemned China's crackdown on democracy in Hong Kong. If a country like New Zealand is ready to balk at the issue of Hong Kong, then they will also carefully avoid many other critical issues. During the entire dismantling of Hong Kong, China always took one step forward and then one step sideways, evaluating domestic and international reactions. Then as their intentions became clearer their steps became firmer, and just when everyone said they would never risk going all the way, China did exactly that—went all the way and never looked back.

The US will lose in many cases because nobody in the world wants American military near their geopolitical areas anymore. These countries have seen what happens when America comes through. And what is worse is they have seen and witnessed what America does afterwards—one can look at Vietnam, Cuba, Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq, northern Iraq, Syria, and Libya. No country leadership would want to risk becoming involved in a similar situation after seeing the losses in each of these countries and, by extension, regions.

This is why I am suggesting to US officials and European NATO officials that NATO becomes the world's number one protector of freedoms and establishes a global foothold right now while it still can. NATO is the only institution left in the world that can take on such a role. While considering Japan as a future member, Australia and New Zealand could become immediate members and other nations,

such as South Korea, affiliates. NATO, with its base in Brussels and 30 members, is perceived much more positively than the US military. Having NATO vessels in the South China Sea or off the coast of Japan and North Korea will be a more effective deterrent than US vessels. Every country in Europe, starting with Germany, France, and Spain, has interests in stabilizing East Asia, which is now geopolitically the most dangerous area. Russia and Putin know their hinterland and their limitations; they will not move beyond those limits. Russia is not a threat to the world anymore—only to its own region and the countries that used to be part of its sphere.

> *"Seeking out different views on what was happening in Turkey, how public opinion was changing, and how these changes could challenge the US's position never seemed pertinent for US officials."*

The US & Turkey

In a 2020 interview with the New York Times, Biden clearly showed his displeasure with Turkey as he asserted for US support for the opposition in Turkey.[7] When I saw this interview, I was surprised, as an issue this critical and bold is not something you tell reporters who are following you around to get stories to print. I knew this was just another case of lack of vision and misguidance. Obama and Biden have both shown the world that they are men of spite—whoever does anything against their interests, they politically target them. This especially includes American institutions and voters. For this reason, properly analyzing what happened between 2014 and 2016 between the Obama administration and Turkey is critical.

In the same interview, Biden also commented that he was worried about the nuclear weapons that are stored in Turkey, an issue that is usually not referred to so explicitly. Everyone knows those warheads, estimated around 50, are there but nobody discusses them. Perhaps Biden has already decided to move the nuclear weapons from Turkey and store them in another country. If this happens, it will come right after the Nagorno-Karabakh war, in which Turkey indirectly assisted America by curbing the role and regional power grab of Russia. If Biden and Democrats were truly worried about Putin and Russia, then they should have thanked Turkey for its role in assisting Azerbaijan in defeating Armenia, and thus Russia.

[7] The Editorial Board, "Joe Biden Says Age Is Just a Number," *New York Times*, 17 January 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/01/17/opinion/joe-biden-nytimes-interview.html

Moreover, Biden should have also then thanked Erdoğan for his success in fending off the Russian proxies in Libya. Turkey fought off Russian mercenaries in Libya successfully, preventing Russia from taking control over Libya. Not only is Turkey realigning its foreign policy and improving its ties with Egypt and Sudan, among other countries, it has already made investments in the entire region, including Libya, where no country in the world is racing to invest in.

Recent History of US-Turkey Relations

The intriguing thing in US-Turkish recent history is that the US and Turkey came very close to fighting in Iraq together two times. In 1991, President Turgut Özal personally lobbied Bush Sr. in order to enter Iraq from the north so that Saddam would be defeated quickly and Turkey could reap the international prestige and economic benefits of assisting its NATO ally afterward. When garnering public opinion for why he wanted to do this, Özal explained to the Turkish people that by doing this, Turkey would have a multiplier effect in return for its active role. Bush Sr. said no, but asked Turkey to keep 200,000 troops on the border to have a deterrent effect on Hussein. Bush Sr. promised Özal and Turkey that the US would be highly appreciative of these gestures and would heavily invest in Turkey accordingly. Although senior administration officials and delegations came to Turkey on Bush's instructions, investments other than minor ones never occurred.

The US could have easily assisted a country with the economic size of Turkey in 1991, but Bush was voted out in January 1993 and Özal died in April 1993. With these two leaders gone, the mutual trust and promises disappeared. Before he passed away, Özal had been planning to reenter politics. Public opinion, however, was not in his favor. Due to the presence of Sunni Muslims in Iraq, Özal had received negative reactions from the Turkish people about his regional policies. He consequently lost immense support. Had Özal lived, he could have met with political disaster on the Turkish stage. Özal bet on the wrong horse, which was America, as they left him without substantial success and benefits that he could clearly present to Turkey and the region. With Iran and Iraq being Turkey's biggest trading partners, Özal remained independent during the Iraq/Iran war of nearly a decade. Yet, after the war, trade and investment with the US remained dismal compared to the US vs. the world, as Bush Sr. left the scene without investing in Turkey.

While placing special emphasis on its military and intelligence sharing with Turkey, always cultivating and protecting those relationships, the US never placed the same kind of emphasis on economic and cultural exchanges. Nobody cared about these issues in Washington, D.C., as deals between Turkey and the US were typically

military contracts. During my banking career, in 1990, I was directly responsible as the senior lead bank/banker for the FMC/Nurol armored combat vehicle project in Gölbaşı, Ankara. This project, which set banking records for Turkey and was the largest project finance deal of its time, was very successful for the US. However, it was a military project, and the US only had a defense-oriented approach toward such big projects. Therefore, the same DC-based institutions were always lobbying the same institutions—defense, intelligence, senior-level bureaucrats, political decision makers—in Ankara. Everyone seemed comfortable with this state of affairs, as there were no pressing issues because of the narrow scope.

"While shoving the Iraq war with arrogance, ignorance, and zero patience, the Bush administration trusted that its traditional partners in Turkey would come through to maintain their perceived strategic relationship."

As a corporate banker, and later during my political career, I had a firsthand view of these situations. My upbringing in Washington, D.C. from 1965-1984, which ingrained the American experience and values within me, followed by my early career at Citibank Istanbul helped me acquire extensive knowledge and a wide perspective about many different issues, especially US-Turkey relations. Citibank at the time was the largest, most powerful financial institution in the world, and it was the first American bank invested in Turkey. Turkish banks learned how to conduct international banking operations and procedures by watching Citibank and its activities. This was crucial for Turkey's economic integration with the West and the international financial system during this period.

Another important step toward Turkey's economic integration with the West was Özal's game-changing decision to make the Turkish lira a fully convertible currency in 1989. Contrary to public fear, people in Turkey were in no rush to change their liras into US dollars. Turkish banks observed Citibank to understand consumer banking trends while monitoring the Turkish economy at the time. I remember having meetings with the owners of family-owned and operated banks in Turkey who wanted to understand my experiences during this transformative period. My unique approach was to combine business and politics to form a bigger picture at all times.

Citibank was also well known in Turkey for its training and development culture,

whereby young bankers who were successfully trained went on to manage Turkey's important banking institutions. As these young bankers had unique international banking experiences and knowledge, almost every one of them was a prime candidate for local banks that were interested in transformation. International banks who decided to follow Citibank and set up banking operations in Turkey during this period also tapped into Citibank's talent pool. The bank's effective teaching techniques allowed young bankers to quickly advance in their careers. It was unusual for Citibank to hire people who did not have graduate degrees but I might have been the only one at age 21 in 1984.

By 1988, I was fortunate to join my boss and a small group of teammates from Citibank in managing Istanbul-based Interbank. Interbank was a medium-sized bank with a good reputation and strong ownership. From day one, our senior management team was empowered by ownership to redefine the culture of the bank as an institution that prided itself on its corporate relationships and successful training of young professionals. Interbank, during our time, was considered the best corporate bank in Turkey. I was fortunate to become an executive at the age of 25 and lead this transformation with my team.

During my eight years there, Interbank became a school for young bankers—just like Citibank. We had a powerful vision, thus we were able to recruit the best and the brightest in Turkey to join Interbank and train them to become successful leaders, many of whom went on to run many different banks and financial groups in Turkey. I do not recall many days off as we worked every day to achieve our objectives, until the day management changed. When I was training young leaders for my political movement, I was able to share my firsthand experiences and knowledge across the board on many issues. I was hoping to parlay my abilities in training young banking leaders into guiding societal leaders in Turkey for civil society and politics. By the age of 35, I was in a perfect position to lead one of the smaller banks in Turkey but I decided to leave my business career and volunteer full-time for my political movement after 1995. At the time, I clearly saw that Turkey needed top-tier civil/political leaders much more than it needed top-tier bankers.
My corporate banking-focused business experience combined with my passion for politics constantly pushed my mindset with the ambition for new ideas and unique solutions, thereby allowing me to handle issues successfully. Today, I carry the sense of accomplishment from a professional/political life that spanned over 25 years from 1984-2010. I personally experienced all of the critical international flashpoints and political tipping points regarding Turkish-American relations, and this multi-part contribution is a reflection of those experiences.

Had the US government set clear objectives for US big business back in the 90s, there

could have easily been a number of American factories in Turkey today. Expatriates from these corporations would not only have had the chance to learn Turkish and Anatolian customs, but also encounter hard-working people that they could build a trust-based long-term relationship going forward. Instead, Washington's scope remained limited to Istanbul and Ankara. There was a standard circle of people and institutions that decision makers would visit in Ankara to expedite their desired decisions. A two-day trip to Ankara, and one night in Istanbul on their way back, to see the same people in the same business and media groups was the typical short, efficient, and targeted trip. After usually spending Friday nights in Istanbul, everyone would be back in Washington, D.C. on Saturday to report their results.

These types of brief and targeted American political visits to Turkey happened routinely from 1993 until 2003. Seeking out different views on what was happening in Turkey, how public opinion was changing, and how these changes could challenge the US's position never seemed pertinent for US officials. Officials saw no need to expand their vision or interests beyond the military and intelligence areas. This so-called strategic partnership between the US and Turkey was so one-dimensional that the vote on the equal distribution of military leadership under Turkish military command, in addition to the even distribution of land forces inside Iraq, ignited the entire relationship, creating permanent faultlines.[8] Slowly but surely Turkey was becoming anti-American. If the US had invested economically, socially, and culturally in Anatolia, I do not believe those stakeholders would have allowed one vote to bring down the relationship.

By the time Condoleezza Rice came to Turkey for her last trip as Secretary of State, she started questioning Turkish officials—including then-Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül—as to why Americans were not welcomed as before and why anti-Americanism was rising in Turkey. She was however too late in her observations. She was neither timely nor properly informed that Turkey had changed for good. Rice was one of the key people under Bush who positioned Turkey permanently in the Middle East with the Greater Middle East Initiative (GMEI), so as a political scientist, she should have been able to comprehend what actually occurred during her watch. I was surprised at how misinformed she was: Rice was told it was the main opposition party, the Republican People's Party (CHP), which was spreading anti-American rhetoric throughout the nation to play to their sensitive base. CHP had neither the motive nor vast grassroots ability to do something like this. They laid the entire blame on the CHP for their stern opposition to the 1 March vote. This was the farthest thing from the truth.

[8] I explain the fallout of the 1 March 2003 vote, in my 2005 article for TPQ called, "Paradigm Shift in Turkish-US Relations," and present how political and military institutions transformed Turkish public opinion at the grassroots level in further detail. See: http://turkishpolicy.com/article/129/paradigm-shift-in-turkish-u-s-relations-spring-2005

Furthermore, government officials reporting to DC would strangely explain to officials behind closed doors how the Turkish military did not take ownership of the vote in parliament and never made any public announcements of support. In other words, despite doing their job, the Turkish military was blamed for being involved in the negotiations leading up to the vote. The defense and national security officials in Washington thus targeted the Turkish military; they did this publicly while expressing their disappointment in the people they knew and trusted for so long. As I note in my 2005 article, "Paradigm Shift in Turkish-US Relations," this did not go over too well in military circles in Turkey. It was clear to me the relationship was severed beyond repair. In July 2003, several months after the US invaded Iraq, Turkish troops were detained in Sulaymaniyah, northern Iraq, by US command in an area where they were not expected to be. During the interrogation and detention period, hoods were placed over their heads. The US downplayed the significance, and instead of criticizing the newly formed government, which Washington politically supported, they criticized the military and the opposition, which was one of the critical downfalls of the relationship. The US officials' and military's lack of moral support was not lost on any military officer in Turkey who was imprisoned on false charges in these years. Individuals who had worked well with Washington, D.C. for decades were left to fight their legal and moral battles alone. Everyone who was watching carefully in Turkey like myself knew exactly what this meant.

In short, while shoving the Iraq war with arrogance, ignorance, and zero patience, the Bush administration trusted that its traditional partners in Turkey would come through to maintain their perceived strategic relationship. There was no effort to check Turkish public opinion and understand how Turkey was changing. Turkey had already voted out much of the political baggage from the 90's. The new government had enough power to do anything with the number of seats it had in parliament, which was unheard of in Turkish politics. Washington should have understood well and been prepared for the CHP's negative vote. Washington did not care about Turkey or the fallout for Turkish people, and almost two decades later, Turkey is still paying for this. In hindsight, had Turkey been the US partner according to the original plan, Turkey at least would have been able to establish economic, social, and cultural networks while American troops pulled away from the region. This would have prevented Iraq from failing as it did. As they quickly lost credibility on weapons of mass destruction along with their welcome in the region, I am sure the US would have been eager to leave most of Iraq to Turkey. Turkey would most certainly have done a better job of rebuilding Iraq with some semblance of decency. If you consider the Turkish business and contractors that have helped northern Iraq's war-torn economy recover, this would have been a better alternative.

Concluding Remarks

Washington, D.C. simply is not in a position anymore to make mistakes, as this luxury is long gone. The last time that everything was done correctly under proper authority, rule of law, international coalitions, and principles directly tied to the war effort was the Iraq War in 1991 under Bush Sr. That was 30 years ago. As for 11 September 2001, that was exactly 20 years ago. Trump frequently talked about the two ongoing endless wars and he did his best to downsize them. Had Trump been re-elected he would have quickly ended both. It is ironic how after the intelligence officers and the media who declared Trump should not to be trusted with the "nuclear button," Trump was the one who was about to end both wars. The lamentable state of the Democratic Party, along with the current state of the media, spell trouble for the US. Personally, I felt much better when Trump had control, as I do not trust Biden and his administration at all. In the next four years, Biden and his policies will have irreparable repercussions for the US and the international community vested in America.

TURKEY NEEDS TO RESPOND TO CHINA'S CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

The Chinese government's oppression of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslim peoples has reached unprecedented levels since late 2016. Human Rights Watch research demonstrates that the Chinese government has committed, and continues to commit, crimes against humanity, including mass arbitrary detention and pervasive restrictions on religious freedoms. The response—or lack, thereof—of Muslim majority countries and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to these crimes has been particularly disappointing. The Turkish government, for example, has not taken the lead many had hoped it would in advocating for the rights of Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples. But it is not too late. Turkey still has the chance to implement concrete policies to hold the Chinese government accountable for its human rights abuses against Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples in Xinjiang.

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The Chinese government's oppression of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslim peoples is not new, but it has reached unprecedented levels since late 2016. In addition to China's mass arbitrary detention and pervasive restrictions on practicing Islam, there is increasing evidence of forced labor, broad surveillance, and unlawful separation of children from their families. Human Rights Watch research shows that the Chinese government has committed, and continues to commit, crimes against humanity, among the gravest human rights abuses under international law.

Some governments, notably the United States, but also the European Union, Canada, and the UK, have imposed targeted sanctions on officials and police agencies responsible for these abuses.[1] But the international community's response is inadequate considering the gravity of these abuses.

The role of Muslim majority countries and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has been particularly disappointing. Not only have they failed to speak out about China's abuses, but more than a dozen OIC member states signed a statement that whitewashes China's policies in Xinjiang.[2] Some of these governments that have portrayed themselves as defenders of the rights of Muslims, including Saudi Arabia,[3] have instead been helping the Chinese government to arrest and even forcibly return[4] Uyghurs in their countries. But back in China, they are likely to face persecution, including torture and arbitrary detention.

These countries' double standards are all the more remarkable given that the Chinese government considers Uyghurs' links to 26 listed Muslim-majority countries—including Turkey—a common criterion for arbitrary detention.[5] In one case, documented in a Chinese official record,[6] four Uyghur family members were given prison sentences[7] of 11 to 23 years for having travelled to Turkey in 2013 and 2014 to visit another relative. Chinese authorities claimed that the man in Turkey, a

[1] Emily Rauhala, "U.S., E.U., Canada and Britain announce sanctions on China over the abuse of Uyghurs," *Washington Post*, 22 March 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/xinjiang-sanctions-european-union/2021/03/22/1b0d69aa-8b0a-11eb-a33e-da28941cb9ac_story.html

[2] Human Rights Watch, "China: Muslim-Majority States Whitewash Abuses," 17 July 2019, https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/07/17/china-muslim-majority-states-whitewash-abuses

[3] Human Rights Watch, "Saudi Arabia: Clarify Status of Uyghur Detainees," 23 November 2020, https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/11/23/saudi-arabia-clarify-status-uyghur-detainees

[4] Human Rights Watch, "Egypt: Don't Deport Uyghurs to China," 7 July 2017, https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/07/08/egypt-dont-deport-uyghurs-china

[5] Human Rights Watch, "'Eradicating Ideological Viruses'-China's Campaign of Repression Against Xinjiang's Muslims," 9 September 2018, https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/09/09/eradicating-ideological-viruses/chinas-campaign-repression-against-xinjiangs

[6] Xinjiang Victims Database, https://shahit.biz/verview.php?no=38

[7] "Siblings Get Lengthy Jail Terms in Xinjiang For Links to Turkey-Based Uyghur Scholar," *Radio Free Asia*, 22 August 2020, https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/scholar-siblings-08222020092753.html

university lecturer named Erkin Emet, belonged to a terrorist organization, and that the money (2,500 US dollars) and gifts his family gave him—including a dutar, a traditional musical instrument, a gold ring, and basic necessities—were evidence that they had been "assisting terrorism."

The Chinese government's policy, which effectively considers links to these countries as supporting terrorism, demonstrates blatant Islamophobia. It is the kind of spurious accusation that many of these governments would have unequivocally condemned had it come from a Western government.

"The Chinese government's oppression of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslim peoples is not new, but it has reached unprecedented levels since late 2016."

The Turkish government's position on Xinjiang has been inconsistent. On the one hand, it called out[8] Xinjiang's abuses in two statements, in February 2019 and October 2020,[9] and said it had raised the issue[10] during the Chinese foreign minister's visit to Turkey in March 2021. On the other hand, it sent back at least four Uyghurs—two women and two children—via Tajikistan to Xinjiang in 2018.[11] Turkish authorities claimed that one of the women was a Tajik national, which her sister denied. Turkey has also signed though not yet ratified an extradition agreement with China, which sends jitters through the Uyghur diaspora community—one of the biggest in the world—for fear that its adoption will increase the risk of Uyghurs being forcibly returned.[12]

The Turkish government has not taken the lead many had hoped it would in advocating for the rights of Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples. In view of the historic and widespread support for Uyghurs and Turkic peoples in Turkish society, the government's ambiguous stance is disappointing. But it is not too late.

[8] Philippe Bolopion, "Turkey Calls Out China's Repression of Uyghurs," *Human Rights Watch*, 14 February 2019, https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/02/14/turkey-calls-out-chinas-repression-uyghurs

[9] Anadolu Ajansı, "Turkey Takes On China At UNGA; Laments Human Rights Violations Of Uighur Muslim," *Eurasian Times*, 7 October 2020, https://eurasiantimes.com/turkey-takes-on-china-laments-human-rights-violations-of-uighur-muslims/

[10] "Turkey raises Uighur issue with China as hundreds protest," *Al Jazeera*, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/25/turkey-says-conveyed-sensitivity-about-uighurs-to-china

[11] "Uyghur Mother, Daughters Deported to China From Turkey," *Radio Free Asia*, 9 September 2019, https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/deportation-08092019171834.html

[12] Daren Butler, "Looming China extradition deal worries Uighurs in Turkey," *Reuters*, 8 March 2021, https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east-africa/looming-china-extradition-deal-worries-uighurs-turkey-2021-03-08/

Human Rights Watch has urged the United Nations Human Rights Council to create a commission of inquiry with authority to investigate alleged grave human rights violations, identify officials responsible for abuses, and provide a road map for holding them accountable. The UN high commissioner for human rights should also monitor and report on the human rights situation in Xinjiang and keep the Human Rights Council regularly informed. Turkey has the chance to play a strong role in facilitating and leading support for these steps, which would send a very clear signal to the Chinese government that such abuses will no longer be tolerated.

Turkey should also impose coordinated visa bans, travel bans, and targeted individual sanctions on authorities responsible for serious rights abuses in Xinjiang. The Turkish authorities should also consider how to pursue domestic criminal cases concerning the abuses in Xinjiang under the concept of "universal jurisdiction," which allows prosecution of grave crimes committed abroad. And they should adopt trade restrictions and other measures to end the use of forced labor in China. Domestically, the Turkish government can do a lot more to protect the Uyghur and Turkic diaspora by ensuring that they have access to a fair system for adjudicating asylum requests, facilitate family reunification by allowing family members of Uyghurs to join them, and end all direct and indirect forced returns of Uyghurs to China. Turkey should also establish systems to track harassment of Uyghurs in Turkey and take steps, including through criminal law, to hold those responsible to account. Finally, it should ensure that Uyghurs have access to legal, medical, and psychological assistance for survivors of torture, rape, and other crimes, and to programs for cultural and religious preservation.

The Turkish government said two years ago that, "The reintroduction of internment camps in the twenty-first century and the policy of systematic assimilation against the Uighur Turks carried out by the authorities of China is a great shame for humanity."[13] The Turkish government needs to move forward with concrete policies to press the Chinese government for accountability and justice for Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples in Xinjiang.

[13] "Statement of the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Hami Aksoy, in response to a question regarding serious human rights violations perpetrated against Uighur Turks and the passing away of folk poet Abdurehim Heyit," 9 February 2019, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc_-06_-uygur-turklerine-yonelik-agir-insan-haklari-ihlalleri-ve-abdurrehim-heyit-in-vefati-hk.en.mfa

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THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION KEEPS ALIVE

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention, was signed by Turkey on 11 May 2011. A landmark treaty for women's rights, the Convention designated gender inequality as the source of violence against women, defining violence as not solely a domestic issue but one of a larger societal problem. Despite being the most comprehensive legal framework that strives to combat domestic violence and gender inequality to date, Turkey withdrew from the treaty with a Presidential Decree at midnight on 20 March 2021. While providing an overview of the domestic dynamics that led to Turkey's withdrawal, this article shines a light on the collective struggle for gender equality in Turkey, arguing that society is now aware of violence more than ever.

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The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence, widely known in Turkey and the world as the "Istanbul Convention," opened for signature on 11 May 2011 in Istanbul. Turkey was the first country to sign the treaty. The obligation to implement the Convention began in 2014, following its ratification by The Great National Assembly of Turkey. According to the 90th article of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, international treaties and conventions have the force of law. Even further, when the law and international conventions contradict with each other on an issue, the articles of international conventions are taken as the basis. In this respect, international conventions are binding.

The Istanbul Convention was signed by the parliament by unanimous vote with great pride. Indeed, the first penalization of Turkey by the European Court of Human Rights in a case of violence against a woman (Opuz/2009) has led Turkey to find solutions to this issue. The fundamental meaning of the Opuz verdict was that violence against women is not solely a domestic issue, but a social problem at large; thus, the state has to take all kinds of measures to prevent violence against women. The Convention was signed under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government, which is still the ruling party.

The most important feature of the Istanbul Convention is that it bases the source of violence against women on gender inequality. In the Convention, it is accepted that the current understanding of gender determines social roles for women and men, and it is emphasized that these roles, produced by society, have a share in violence against women. The Convention defines "gender-based violence" as "violence against women because of being a woman and that disproportionately affects women." From this point of view, the Convention stipulates that the mentality that produces violence should be educated and that gender equality be ensured. The provision that best describes this purpose is Article 12 of the Explanatory Report on the Istanbul Convention:

> The obligations…are based on the conviction of the drafters that existing patterns of behaviour of women and men are often influenced by prejudices, gender stereotypes and gender-biased customs or traditions. Parties to the Convention are therefore required to take measures that are necessary to promote changes in mentality and attitudes. The purpose of this provision is to reach the hearts and minds of individuals who, through their behaviour, contribute to perpetuate the forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention.[1]

[1] The Council of Europe, *Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, CETS No. 210 opened for signature in Istanbul (Turkey) on 11 May 2011 and explanatory report* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2012).

In addition, the Convention describes the forms of violence against women: psychological, physical and sexual violence, rape, genital mutilation, forced marriage, forced abortion, and forced sterilization. The Convention also defines concepts that have entered our lives in recent years, such as stalking and violence registered through information systems (digital violence), and produces solutions. Furthermore, the Convention clearly states that violence against women cannot be justified through culture, tradition, religion, customs, or so-called honor, and adds that violence against women cannot be justified by allegations such as victims not complying with cultural, religious, social, or traditional rules and customs.

> *"The most important feature of the Istanbul Convention is that it bases the source of violence against women on gender inequality."*

The 4P Rule

In terms of ending violence against women, the Convention bases its structure on four obligations called the 4P rule:

- Prevention
- Protection
- Prosecution
- Policy (acting through holistic policies)

Undoubtedly, preventive measures are much more important than criminal sanctions. No matter how much you punish the perpetrator after the violent incident occurs, it is of no use in terms of removing the traces of the violence from the victim. Therefore, preventive measures are essential. Since this is the fundamental point of view of the Istanbul Convention, the treaty has placed a significant emphasis on preventive measures, such as awareness raising, data retention, gender equality training within the compulsory curriculum, training of experts, allocation of financial resources, supporting non-governmental organizations, preventive intervention and treatment programs, and media participation.

Protective measures are also widely covered: post-violence psychological, legal, and social support services, the establishment of shelters as well as coordination centers for combating sexual violence, access to emergency hotlines, and prohibition of the compulsory alternative dispute resolution.

The third pillar stipulates that when violence occurs, the perpetrator shall be investigated and, on a case basis, prosecution shall be started. If a punishment is to be imposed for violence, it indicates that an effective criminal sentence should be applied. For example, unjust provocation or good conduct abatement should not be applied, or traditional situations such as "honor" concerns and customs should not be justified. In summary, practices that could create a perception of impunity, encourage perpetrators of violence, and legitimize violence should not be included.

The principle of acting with holistic policies represents a tenet of the Convention. It gives the signatory state the obligation to develop and quickly implement policies to prevent violence. The signatory state should do whatever it takes to prevent violence against women and observe gender equality in all areas, attitudes, and discourses. This principle emphasizes the necessity of a signatory state to be sincere in preventing violence.

Turkey and the Istanbul Convention

The European Council mechanism that controls whether the Istanbul Convention is implemented in the signatory countries is Grevio. Every two years, Grevio prepares a report that determines whether the Convention is implemented in the signatory countries and makes recommendations according to the level of urgency to the signatory country. In the 2018 report on Turkey, Grevio had determined a complex and alarming situation with regard to violence against women in Turkey. 65 suggestions, 47 of which were urgent, were made.

The women's movement in Turkey especially often stressed effective implementation of the Istanbul Convention since it entered into force. In addition, the women's movement also struggled for the effective implementation of the Protection Law No. 6284, which was prepared based on the Istanbul Convention and entered into force in 2012. Meanwhile, femicides and violence against women continued to increase. Upon the increase in divorces, the ruling political power (AKP) established a commission, known as the "Divorce Commission," in the Turkish Grand National Assembly in order to prevent divorces. This commission prepared a report in 2016. Unfortunately, the report seemed to be a project of all the legislative initiatives that constitute an attack on the vested rights of women in Turkey; it essentially planned to keep women married and not divorce, despite all kinds of violence, murders, and isolation from public life and employment. There was even a suggestion that the perpetrator's punishment would be partially forgiven or postponed if the abused child and the perpetrator marry, which paved the way for child marriages and garnered severe public reaction. This report also included the proposal for the law that muftis could registrate civil marriage, the suggestion that alimony should

be restricted, the compulsory mediation proposal in divorce cases, the opinions that attack the principle of "the statement of the woman is essential," and many other findings. While some of the recommendations in this report have been implemented despite all the reactions of the public, others are pending implementation.

So, why are women sought to be locked up at home? President Erdoğan gives the advice of "at least 3 children" at every opportunity because they need a young population. It does not concern Erdoğan whether the young population is qualified to participate in the workforce or vote; the survival of his political power is above all. In short, he sees political power and the female body as a means for the survival of his power. Of course, beneath all this is the desire to continue the masculine hegemony. Considering that it is one of the pioneers of the right-wing populist trend in the world, the AKP administration is one of the most affected by the crisis of masculinity. However, where gender equality exists, there is also democracy, and democracy is not a method adopted by the AKP. They prefer to use democracy only as a tool to abolish democracy.

> *"Preventive measures are much more important than criminal sanctions."*

The Istanbul Convention was a serious obstacle in terms of all these plans of the ruling political power. For this reason, they have frequently expressed the need to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention during the last two years. Before the denial of the Istanbul Convention, the media in favor of the ruling political power initiated a smearing campaign regarding Law No. 6284. They defined the Istanbul Convention as a law that "destroys the traditional household structure" since it kept the perpetrator away from the victim and their home. However, both Law No. 6284 and the Istanbul Convention were lifesaving legal regulations. The media, together with AKP officials, spread the discourse that the Istanbul Convention spread homosexuality, destroyed families, and contradicted our values.

Especially during the summer of 2020, a great effort was made by everyone who believed in equality and freedom, especially women, to eliminate this baseless and ridiculous discourse and to enlighten society about the Istanbul Convention. It has been repeatedly stated that the Convention does not have a special purpose such as spreading homosexuality or destroying the family, and that its only purpose is to prevent violence against women. It was announced that Article 4, in which the phrase "sexual

orientation" was included, was an article on the prohibition of discrimination, and stated that individuals who were subjected to violence regardless of gender, language, religion, color, race, sexual orientation, or any other factor should be protected by the state.

All women, especially the women's movement, including women who were AKP voters, embraced the Istanbul Convention and the Law No. 6284 with their hearts and souls. The smearing of Law No. 6284 was subsequently suspended. We think that the Istanbul Convention was the target mainly and primarily. Later, in the Official Gazette dated 20 March 2021, published in the middle of the night, the Presidential Decree on the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention was published. The whole country stood up against this decision. Although the ruling political power had signalled this for a long time, no one predicted that it would happen this way at midnight, by the decision of a single person.

Article 80 of the Istanbul Convention states that party states can withdraw from the Istanbul Convention with a notification to the General Secretariat of the Council of Europe. Then it adds that the termination of the contract becomes effective three months after this notification. Although a notification has been made to the General Secretariat of the Council of Europe in line with the said Presidential Decree, the constitutionality of the president's decision is in question. In essence, therefore, a decision that actually does not exist has been notified to the Council.

The first paragraph of Article 90 of the Constitution states that the approval of treaties and conventions with foreign states and international organizations on behalf of the Republic of Turkey is subjected to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey finding the decision suitable with law. Since the Istanbul Convention was signed by a law of approval issued by the Turkish Grand National Assembly, in accordance with the principle of "Parallelism in Authority and Procedure," which is one of the important principles of Turkish Law, the Convention must be exited by the same procedure. That is, by issuing a law, with the approval of the Parliament; yet this condition is not complied with. In addition, Article 104 of the Constitution clearly states that fundamental rights and freedoms cannot be regulated by presidential decree. The Istanbul Convention, in this context, is about the fundamental rights, especially the right to life, and freedoms of everyone who is subjected to violence. It is also stated in the same article that presidential decrees cannot be issued on matters clearly regulated in the law. The Protection Law No. 6284 explicitly refers to the Istanbul Convention. In other words, it is clear that it will not be possible to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention even with a presidential decree.

As the reason for the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, it was stated by the

ruling political power that the Convention normalized homosexuality and harmed family values. This statement was absolutely unlawful and an unrealistic justification that pushes the boundaries of logic. European countries such as Hungary and Bulgaria, which have not ratified the Convention, and Poland that is discussing withdrawal from the Convention, were cited as examples. It is interesting that the common side of the aforementioned countries is that they are governed by governments who have adopted authoritarian populist regimes. However, the *Mecelle*, the legal framework that regulated civil law in the late Ottoman Empire, which the AKP has taken as an example, says: A bad example is not an example.

Some opposition parties, bar associations, women's organizations, and individuals have applied to the Council of State for the annulment of the withdrawal decision. However, as citizens of a country where judicial independence and impartiality are in doubt, everyone is worried about the decision to be made.

> *"Considering that it is one of the pioneers of the right-wing populist trend in the world, the AKP administration is one of the most affected by the crisis of masculinity."*

What Now?

The EU and the US have declared Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention as "unfortunate." In Turkey, opposition parties and many civil society organizations have contacted the Council of Europe. It is obvious that this undemocratic and unlawful interference has further weakened Turkey's already poor human rights record. However, it does not look like the ruling political power will take a step back in this regard. For President Erdoğan, winning the next elections and staying in power is the most important goal. The Istanbul Convention was an issue of bargaining in domestic politics. Part of the opposition's "Nation Alliance," the Saadet Party from the national vision tradition was the party that opposed the Istanbul Convention the most from the very beginning. It is a well-known fact that President Erdoğan has made serious efforts to split the Nation Alliance, especially since the local election defeat. The Istanbul Convention has been the diet of these division efforts and some political negotiations. Consequently, what happened has happened to women and everyone who was subjected to violence due to gender inequality. Six women were killed in 12 hours after the decision to withdraw from the Convention was issued. Withdrawing from the Istanbul Convention created a perception of impunity in itself. Leaving a

comprehensive convention that protects women and those subjected to violence due to gender inequality gave perpetrators the idea that they were protected.

Women's organizations, bar associations, and legal organizations that combated violence against women used the explicit provision of the Istanbul Convention as a basis for violence cases. Now we have concerns about what will happen in such cases. However, even though the ruling political power seems to support the Law No. 6284 on Protection, people are concerned that they will be able to abolish the Law No. 6284 in the future, just like they withdrew from the Istanbul Convention, which they had signed with pride. In addition, people are also worried that they will continue to increase violence to take away our vested rights through attempts such as limiting alimony, abuse amnesty, and compulsory mediation in divorce cases.

Despite all these negativities, in the global world and in the digital age, it is no longer easy to restrain people's thoughts, especially women's. The inevitable end cannot be avoided forever through repression, prohibition, authoritarianism, populism, and devised perception. Indeed, a "reaction" is developing against all this "action." As a result of adverse events, people's awareness of violence is increasing. For instance, the Istanbul Convention, which only a limited number of people knew of before, has now been heard by all. Women are getting organized as the collective struggle grows rapidly. The resistance continues to grow stronger. When you look at history, you will see that the women's movement has always progressed with gains. It will be so again. No matter how many obstacles the patriarchy creates, women will overcome these obstacles and continue to progress on the road to equality. After all, the "Future is Female."

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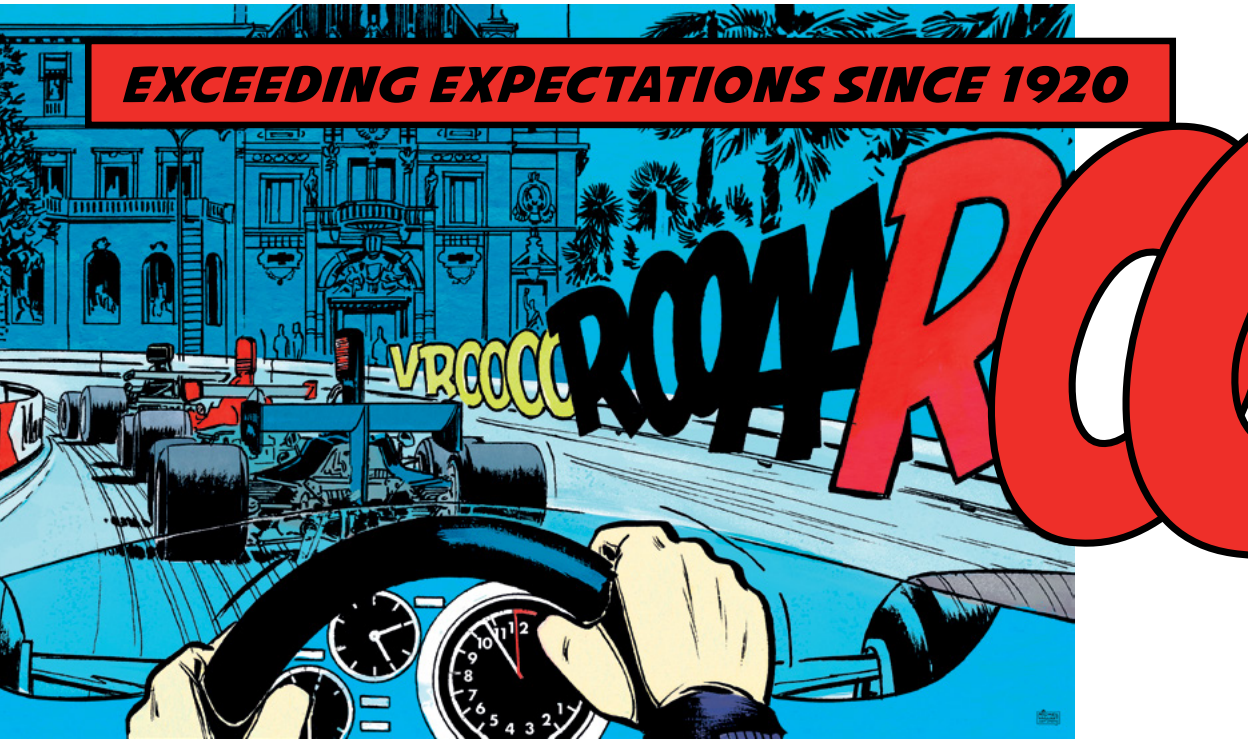

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WOULD A FAREWELL TO ERDOĞAN MEAN DEMOCRACY FOR TURKEY?

Erdoğan's chances of being reelected are decreasing due to severe economic downturn and the emergence of credible and able challengers to his rule. Nonetheless, a post-Erdoğan era would not automatically spell democracy for Turkey, especially when observing the country's authoritarian practices even before Erdoğan came onto the scene. Thus, Turkish opposition not only has to be successful in the upcoming elections but also make deliberate efforts aimed at overcoming the country's democratic challenges embodied in the strong state structure and elite resistance to pluralism, both of which operate at the expense of individual rights for a consolidated democracy in the country.

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For Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, maintaining a grip on power is becoming increasingly difficult after an incessant 18-year-long reign. Erdoğan owed his popularity, largely, to the delivery of good governance, robust services, and strong economic growth in the first decade of his tenure, yet these early successes have undergone a stark, albeit gradual, reversal. Since 2017, the value of the Turkish lira against the US dollar has plummeted from .29 to .13 and nearly one in four young people are now unemployed. This economic downturn has come at a political cost, as was made evident during the 2019 local elections when Erdoğan's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) lost five of Turkey's six largest cities, representing over 59 percent of the country's GDP and 45 percent of its population.

Recently the coronavirus pandemic has exerted immense pressure on the already fragile Turkish economy, spelling catastrophe for Erdoğan. Even based on the most optimistic forecasts that Turkey will only experience a single wave of rapid infection, the labor market is expected to shrink to 26.529 million by the end of the year, meaning that nearly 2.2 million people have lost their jobs since 2018.[1] In addition to shutting down businesses, the crisis has inflicted a major blow to Turkey's tourism industry, a sector that single-handedly lost nearly 23 billion dollar revenue in 2020 comparing with 2019.[2] Erdoğan's biggest trump card, the ballot box, may no longer work to his advantage as the already heavily indebted economy spirals further out of control.

It is expected that Erdoğan would do everything in his power to remain in office if faced with an electoral defeat, whether by instrumentalizing societal and political polarization or by applying more forceful tactics. Yet the conditions that would facilitate his continued grip on power are rapidly deteriorating. With this in mind, it should still be recognized that Turkey exhibited severe democratic deficiencies even before Erdoğan refined the parameters of his own brand of authoritarianism. Erdoğan's departure would not necessarily mean a prompt transition to democracy for Turkey, unless the opposition makes deliberate efforts aimed at overcoming the challenges facing the country's democratic consolidation.

Changing Political Parameters in Turkish Politics

Erdoğan has a strong will to remain in power and has signaled that he can and will

[1] OECD, "OECD Economic Outlook No.108," December 2020, https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EO

[2] Hatice Özdemir Tosun and Tuba Şahin, "Turkish tourism sector may shrink 70 % due to pandemic," *Anadolu Agency*, 26 November 2020, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/economy/turkish-tourism-sector-may-shrink-70-due-to-pandemic/2056677; "Record number of tourists visit Turkey in 2019," *Hurriyet Daily News*, 31 January 2020, https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/record-number-of-tourists-visit-turkey-in-2019-151600

deploy certain political strategies intended to divide the opposition and energize his political base as he had done several times in the past. Nonetheless, the current political context in Turkey changed in two ways and made such option quite difficult. First, public support for the AKP will continue to dwindle so long as a solution to the intense economic downturn remains elusive. Recent polls conducted by Konda, one of Turkey's most credible polling firms, indicate that support for the AKP has declined to 25 percent.[3] Second, there are now new, credible, and able challengers to Erdoğan's leadership. Despite coopting like-minded, right-wing rival party leaders such as Numan Kurtulmuş and Süleyman Soylu to the ranks of his own party, Erdoğan was unable to prevent his former prime minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu, and deputy prime minister, Ali Babacan, from forming their own parties that could eat into his electoral base.

"Erdoğan's biggest trump card, the ballot box, may no longer work to his advantage as the already heavily indebted economy spirals further out of control."

Similarly, Erdoğan has been unsuccessful in halting the popular appeal of superstars within the opposition, namely the CHP mayors of Istanbul and Ankara, respectively Ekrem İmamoğlu and Mansur Yavaş. İmamoğlu rose to national stardom immediately upon the night of his initial mayoral election victory in 2019 as a result of his efforts to make sure that all votes were counted correctly. After contesting the results, the AKP's high-profile mayoral candidate and former prime minister Binali Yıldırım was subsequently defeated in the rerun election by an embarrassingly higher margin of 9.2 percent. In Ankara, Mansur Yavaş is steadily increasing his popularity and stature as a nation-wide politician through his efficient administration and active approach to assisting the public during the COVID-19 crisis. A poll on the performance of these political figures conducted by Metropol indicated that Yavaş is securing more support than Erdoğan over his response to COVID-19, scoring a public approval rating of 8.18 out of 10 compared to Erdoğan's 6.65.[4] These two politicians have gone national and exhibit the potential to assuage the bitter polarization that Erdoğan has been skillfully exploiting for electoral gains.

[3] "Ağırdır: AKP'nin oyu yüzde 25'e kadar geriledi [Ağırdır: The AKP's vote share has dropped to as low as 25 percent]," *Gazete Karınca*, 14 October 2020, https://gazetekarinca.com/2020/10/agirdir-akpnin-oyu-yuzde-25e-kadar-geriledi/

[4] "Ankara Mayor more successful in managing coronavirus crisis than Erdoğan: Poll," *Duvar English*, 7 May 2020, https://www.duvarenglish.com/politics/2020/05/07/ankara-mayor-more-successful-in-managing-coronavirus-crisis-than-erdogan-poll

Considering these changing parameters, for the first time in twenty years the opposition is eager for an upcoming elections and is even calling for an early election. A large spectrum of the opposition is reallistically anticipating a win in the elections that could put an end to the Erdoğan era and revert Turkey back to democracy.

The Challenges of a Post-Erdoğan Scenario

A post-Erdoğan Turkey would not automatically spell democracy for Turkey. A brief look at the unhealthy and rapidly fluctuating state of Turkish democracy before Erdoğan makes this abundantly clear. Unless the country's democratic deficits are addressed with unprecedented fervor, the systematic problems that predated—and were exacerbated by—Erdoğan will continue to haunt the country. Turkish democracy has long faced challenges in protecting individual liberties and minority rights vis-à-vis the majority and the state, it is the victim of unsettled identity crises exhibited in debates over secularism and the Kurdish question, and it has consistently struggled to overcome the state's tutelary dominance over democratic politics. All these problems constitute the core of different political groups' forms of resistance to pluralism, both on the left and the right. This dynamic is also manifested in the political elites' inability to embrace one another as legitimate actors and rivals to compete as opposed to enemies that need to be rooted out and eradicated. Turkish elites envision a Turkey that is run solely by their own ideological group rather than by all groups under an equitable and democratic give-and-take, and it is the elites, at the center of societal polarization, who drive the masses, not the other way around.[5] Both secular and conservative factions lack faith in each other's legitimacy and ability to rule. On one side of the coin, conservatives are convinced that they are the only group with the right to run the country, as secularists are not "native and national" (*yerli ve milli*) enough to be trustworthy.[6] On the flipside, secularists conclude that they are the one true owner and inheritor of the republic founded by Kemal Atatürk, whereas the conservatives are petulant and reactionary. Furthermore, an unfortunate commonality between these rival political groups is their intransigence towards the political rights of Turkey's Kurdish populations.

Labeled a "strong state"[7] by some scholars, the omnipotent system of Turkey's governance goes hand in hand with its resistance to pluralism. This "strong state" tradition enables those in power to have the final say in all-encompassing matters from the redistribution of wealth to the promotion/suppression of certain lifestyles.

[5] Selim Koru, "Erdoğan's Turkey and Problem of the 30 Million," *War on the Rocks*, 4 June 2020, https://warontherocks.com/2020/06/erdogans-turkey-and-the-problem-of-the-30-million/

[6] "Erdoğan: CHP yerli ve milli değil, Kandil'le irtibat kuruyor [Erdoğan: The CHP isn't native and national, it's in contact with Kandil]," *Cumhuriyet*, 8 September 2017, https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/video/erdogan-chp-yerli-ve-milli-degil-kandille-irtibat-kuruyor-819363

[7] Metin Heper, "The Strong State as a Problem for the Consolidation of Democracy: Turkey and Germany Compared," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (July 1992), pp. 169-94.

This explains the intensity and magnitude of the struggle between secularists and conservatives to determine who will hold the levers of power within the state. Both secularists and conservatives intend to keep their bureaucratic posts and to distribute lucrative governmental contacts exclusively to their constituents, while simultaneously extending government regulations at the expense of individual liberties. The ban on the headscarf in public buildings, and the restrictions on the sale and advertisement of alcoholic beverages are just a few examples of the state's power to dictate lifestyles.

> *"A post-Erdoğan Turkey would not automatically spell democracy for Turkey."*

The acme of this system of control was manifested in the presidential system that was initiated and subsequently headed by Erdoğan in 2017. Providing the executive branch of the government with nearly unlimited power, the enactment of the Turkish presidential system was one of the most decisive factors behind Freedom House's downgrading of Turkey's democratic ranking from "partly free" to "not free" in 2018.[8] Should there be a successor to Erdoğan, s/he would certainly find these powers of the presidency tempting, if not convenient. Thus, the first challenge of a post-Erdoğan era would be to either establish checks on the strong executive or to return to a parliamentary system. The current opposition has expressed its preference for the latter,[9] despite its pre-Erdoğan imperfections.

The prospects for Turkish democracy depend on the willingness and competence of post-Erdoğan actors to establish checks and balances, expand and protect individual rights, and to set a free and fair playing field that eases hostilities among elites. If opposition parties were to follow through on their preference to reverse the presidential system into a reformed and improved parliamentary system, this would be a good first step towards breaking the cycle. Yet even if this were to happen, there are still no substantial signs of these parties' willingness/ability to limit the power of the state to trample individual rights and assault pluralism. Worryingly, there is actually a nostalgia for the "old Turkey,"[10] which stands in direct opposition to Erdoğan's

[8] Arch Puddington (ed.), *Freedom in the World 2018: The Annual Survey of Political Rights & Civil Liberties* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers), p. 1021.

[9] Hilal Köylü,"Millet İttifakı'ndan 'parlementer sistem' atağı ['Parliamentary system' push from the National Alliance]," *DW Türkçe*, 4 June 2018, https://www.dw.com/tr/millet-ittifakından-parlamenter-sistem-atağı/a-44068374

[10] Murat Muratoğlu, "Gençler gelin 'Eski Türkiye'yi anlatayim [Youngsters come here I'll explain the 'Old Turkey']," *Sözcü*, 6 June 2018, https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2018/yazarlar/murat-muratoglu/gencler-gelin-eski-turkiyeyi-anlatayim-2451365/

"new Turkey."[11] Such a trend refuses to reconcile the issues faced by Turkey before Erdoğan, and instead emphasizes *current* injustices and authoritarian practices in the country while turning a blind eye to the past.

The Way Forward: An Elite Pact for Pluralist Democracy

The best case scenario for Turkish democracy is only possible through the acknowledgement and resolution of Turkey's systemic and political deficits that were present before Erdoğan. A nostalgia for "old Turkey" misses the point in that the fundamental flaws in Turkey's systems of governance were in fact the catalyst for Erdoğan and the AKP's rise to prominence through free and fair elections. Along these lines, a return to the status quo ante would only bring about the return of a faulty approach that is vulnerable to new deviations of anti-democratic practices that risk the production of new authoritarian leaders. While having control over the all-powerful instruments of the state may be tempting for both secularists and conservatives, all parties need to realize and actively work against the dangers of the winner-takes-all mentality. Unchanged, future shifts in Turkish power dynamics risk pushing the country to a breaking point, not only along the secular/conservative fault lines but along Turkish/Kurdish ethnic divides. With this in mind, steps towards increasing inclusivity and tolerance within Turkey's democracy are more of a necessity than a luxury.

In order to overcome this impasse between elite groups, there is a need for an institutional arrangement that assuages the fears of all segments of Turkish society by providing guarantees and safeguards for basic rights. An accord that expands such protection of individual rights vis-à-vis the state, that enforces a merit-based bureaucracy, and that eliminates the rent-distributing state structure, may help to end or at least deescalate elite battles for control. These measures may not only ease the path to democratization but also facilitate and foster the emergence of a social milieu that champions long-lasting peace among Turkey's various ideologies and ethnicities. This settlement could be achieved through an elite pact between secularists, conservatives, and Kurds in the form of a new pluralistic constitution.

In this highly optimistic scenario, Erdoğan's widespread crackdown on diverse segments of the society would be a blessing in disguise. Different ideological groups all suffering under Erdoğan's yoke might find it convenient to cooperate with one another. We have already witnessed such unlikely bedfellows in Istanbul's last municipal elections, as nationalist voters of the Good Party aligned with the pro-Kurdish

[11] Günter Seufert, "Erdoğan's New Turkey: Restoring the Authoritarian State in the name of Democracy," SWP Comment 2014/C 44, October 2014, https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/erdogans-new-turkey/

HDP.[12] Under the leadership of the CHP, the National Alliance (*Millet Ittifaki*), has now come to consist of the right-wing Democratic Party (DP), Islamist Felicity Party (SP), and the nationalist Good Party. This diverse alliance did not only come together to participate in the elections but it even went one step further by agreeing on a common commitment to return to the parliamentary system, to fight for the separation of powers, and to strengthen the rule of law.[13] The National Alliance and its shared principles may later be used as the basis for a new constitutional framework. It is not far-fetched to see such a constellation eventually including Kurds as well as AKP and Erdoğan defectors, such as the AKP splinter parties headed by Babacan and Davutoğlu.

> *"The best case scenario for Turkish democracy is only possible through the acknowledgement and resolution of Turkey's systemic and political deficits that were present before Erdoğan."*

In this sense, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, as the leader of the CHP, would play the key role in bringing such a grand coalition together. In the rare moments where the opposition has succeeded in slighting the ruling party, Kılıçdaroğlu has been known to transcend his CHP chairmanship and act as the leader of a united opposition. One of his predecessors, the second president of Turkey, İsmet İnönü played an important role in transitioning the country to the multi-party system[14] after Second World War, in what might be considered the most significant step of Turkey's democratic opening. İnönü, as the head of the state, had access to all the necessary resources and levers of power; he could have moved forward alone, but he did not. In comparison, Kılıçdaroğlu could play a similar role as a pivotal actor in uniting a divided opposition for the greater good of Turkish democracy. In order to avoid strong nationalist backlash however, this grand coalition may have to keep the HDP as a silent partner. Or as a better way to move forward, this grand coalition could delegate the writing of a draft constitution to a commission consisting of selected experts and representatives of civil society representing diverse views.

[12] Megan Specia, "In Istanbul Election Do-Over, Erdoğan's Oppnents Unify," *New York Times*, 7 May 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/07/world/europe/istanbul-election.html

[13] "Turkish opposition parties working on a wide ranging alliance program for elections," *Duvar English*, 11 October 2020, https://www.duvarenglish.com/politics/2020/10/11/turkish-opposition-parties-working-on-a-wide-ranging-alliance-program-for-elections

[14] John M. Vanderlippe, *The Politics of Turkish Democracy: Ismet Inonu and the Formation of Turkish Multi-Party System, 1938-1950* (New York: SUNY Press, 2012).

Turkey is reaching a crossroads, and Erdoğan's efforts to cling on to power continue despite their decreasing degree of success. At the same time, it is hard to argue that the opposition has truly learned and internalized the lessons of Turkey's troubled democratic past. Shortsightedly, the opposition is focusing too much of its attention on ridding the country of an authoritarian leader without giving much thought to the roadmap that would eliminate the authoritarian structures and mentalities that prompted Erdoğan's rise. While fledgling efforts to reverse the authoritarian makeup of the system sprout, a way forward is possible. But reaching this path of unfettered democratization will require the opposition leaders' persistent and decisive efforts to draft a new democratic constitution rooted in the principles of pluralism.

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THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION & OUR STRUGGLE FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Turkey was the first country to sign the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in 2011. In a shocking move, the Turkish government published a midnight decree to withdraw from the treaty on 20 March 2021 for no clear reason. Those who have advocated for Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention argues that the treaty harms traditional Turkish family values. This article takes a look at why this is not the case, and how the implementation of the treaty is in fact crucial for the future generations of Turkey.

Gözde Serbest*

TPQ
Spring 2021

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At midnight on 19 March 2021, in my beloved country, it was suddenly announced that a decision was made to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention, of which the official title is "Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence." This triggered social media posts and street protests with banners bearing the words "The Istanbul Convention keeps us alive." What was the purpose behind taking this withdrawal decision at midnight, especially considering the fact that Turkey was the first to sign the Istanbul Convention in 2011? Couldn't they have waited until the morning, for example? Was it really that urgent? What was the need for taking away these rights from women immediately? What is the purpose of withdrawing from the Istanbul Convention? To whom is the message addressed, on the other hand? I don't know the answer to these questions. I don't know whether there are any answers, but if there are, please share them with me. Let me put it this way; I wonder if the country was a bed of roses and only the Istanbul Convention was the problem? As if unemployment rates were low, violence against women was over, the country's economic situation was excellent, exports were thriving, money was flowing in, and there were no problems for farmers and laborers, it was time to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention, is that so? Or was the aim to change the public perception and change the agenda? I am curious what kind of threat the Istanbul Convention posed that this decision had to be taken so hastily, flouting procedure and law? Who was upset by the Istanbul Convention's rights for women, and why? Together, let us ponder. What harm does this Convention cause and to whom?

Chapter I – Purposes, Definitions, Equality and Non-Discrimination, General Obligations

Article 1 – Purposes of the Convention

The purposes of this Convention are to

a. protect women against all forms of violence, and prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence;
b. contribute to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and promote substantive equality between women and men, including by empowering women;
c. design a comprehensive framework, policies and measures for the protection of and assistance to all victims of violence against women and domestic violence;
d. promote international co-operation with a view to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence;
e. provide support and assistance to organizations and law enforcement agencies

to effectively cooperate in order to adopt an integrated approach to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence.

In this article, the parties clearly state the purpose of the convention, which is to prevent violence against women. I would especially like to draw your attention to Article 1 (b). It says, "Promote substantive equality between women and men," and the aim is to establish gender equality, not to elevate one group over another. This article does not contain any clauses or arguments that would justify the withdrawal from the Convention or that would threaten to harm family values as argued by those who withdrew.

"What is the purpose of withdrawing from the Istanbul Convention?"

Article 2- Scope of the Convention

1. This Convention shall apply to all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, which affects women disproportionately.
2. Parties are encouraged to apply this Convention to all victims of domestic violence. Parties shall pay particular attention to women victims of gender-based violence in implementing the provisions of this Convention.
3. This Convention shall apply in times of peace and in situations of armed conflict.

According to Article 2, the Convention applies at all times, regardless of peace or conflict, because it seeks to protect female victims of any kind of violence.

Article 3 - Definitions

For the purpose of this Convention:

a. "Violence against women" is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological, or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life;

b. "Domestic violence" shall mean all acts of physical, sexual, psychological, or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim;

c. "Gender" shall mean the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men;

d. "Gender-based violence against women" shall mean violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately;

e. "Victim" shall mean any natural person who is subject to the conduct specified in points a and b;

f. "Women" includes girls under the age of 18.

This Article provides the definitions of the terms such as "Violence against women," "Domestic violence," "Gender," "Gender-based violence against women," "Victim," and "Woman."

Article 4 – Fundamental Rights, Equality, and Non-Discrimination

1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative and other measures to promote and protect the right for everyone, particularly women, to live free from violence in both the public and the private sphere.
2. Parties condemn all forms of discrimination against women and take, without delay, the necessary legislative and other measures to prevent it, in particular by
    - embodying in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation the principle of equality between women and men and ensuring the practical realization of this principle;
    - prohibiting discrimination against women, including through the use of sanctions, where appropriate;
    - abolishing laws and practices which discriminate against women.
3. The implementation of the provisions of this Convention by the Parties, in particular measures to protect the rights of victims, shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, gender, race, color, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, state of health,

disability, marital status, migrant or refugee status, or other status.

4. Special measures that are necessary to prevent and protect women from gender-based violence shall not be considered discrimination under the terms of this Convention.

This Article has been arranged in such a civilized and humanistic way that we see that this Convention will protect the right of all humanity to live free from violence, notably by stating "everyone" in the first sentence.

"For those who believe the Convention violates our customs, traditions, and family values, I ask: In what part of our tradition is there a rule allowing violence against women?"

Article 5 – State Obligations and Due Diligence

1. Parties shall refrain from engaging in any act of violence against women and ensure that State authorities, officials, agents, institutions, and other actors acting on behalf of the State act in conformity with this obligation.
2. Parties shall take the necessary legislative and other measures to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate, punish, and provide reparation for acts of violence covered by the scope of this Convention that are perpetrated by non-State actors.

Here, it is mentioned that states that are parties to this Convention will carry out their obligations to prevent violence against women meticulously.

Article 6 – Gender-Sensitive Policies

Parties shall undertake to include a gender perspective in the implementation and evaluation of the impact of the provisions of this Convention and to promote and effectively implement policies of equality between women and men and the empowerment of women.

It appears that the purpose of this Article is to ensure equality between women and men and to empower women in society.

Chapter II – Integrated Policies and Data Collection

Article 7 – Comprehensive and Coordinated Policies

1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative and other measures to adopt and implement statewide effective, comprehensive and coordinated policies encompassing all relevant measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention and offer a holistic response to violence against women.
2. Parties shall ensure that policies referred to in paragraph 1 place the rights of the victim at the center of all measures and are implemented by way of effective co-operation among all relevant agencies, institutions, and organizations.
3. Measures taken pursuant to this article shall involve, where appropriate, all relevant actors, such as government agencies, the national, regional, and local parliaments and authorities, national human rights institutions, and civil society organizations.

This Article says that the state parties will act in a holistic approach to prevent violence all over the world.

Article 8 – Financial Resources

Parties shall allocate appropriate financial and human resources for the adequate implementation of integrated policies, measures and programs to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention, including those carried out by non-governmental organizations and civil society.

This Article says that the state parties will provide the necessary financial and human resources to prevent violence. This is, after all, the necessity of being a social state. Nothing in this Article requires the Convention to be canceled.

Article 9 – Non-Governmental Organizations and Civil Society

Parties shall recognize, encourage and support, at all levels, the work of relevant non-governmental organizations and of civil society active in combating violence against women and establish effective co-operation with these organizations.

This Article, as the other Articles mentioned above, has no element in contradiction with the Turkish family structure; the Article mentions the obligation of the state parties to work in cooperation with non-governmental organizations that combat violence against women and to support these organizations. Our country has non-governmental organizations that combat violence against women, doing serious and excellent work on this issue. Especially the Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation *(Mor Çatı Kadın Sığınağı Vakfı)* is one of them. Greetings and love from here to the secret heroes who have contributed to combating violence against women. I thank them for their hard work. I am more than glad that they exist! In fact, the state has an indispensable obligation to support these non-governmental organizations. Once again, this Article emphasizes the importance of this obligation.

Article 10 – Coordinating Body

1. Parties shall designate or establish one or more official bodies responsible for the co-ordination, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by this Convention. These bodies shall co-ordinate the collection of data as referred to in Article 11, analyze and disseminate its results.
2. Parties shall ensure that the bodies designated or established pursuant to this article receive information of a general nature on measures taken pursuant to Chapter VIII.
3. Parties shall ensure that the bodies designated or established pursuant to this article shall have the capacity to communicate directly and foster relations with their counterparts in other Parties.

This Article explains the obligations given to the state parties regarding the establishment and coordination of institutions that will work to prevent violence against women.

Article 11 – Data Collection and Research

1. For the purpose of the implementation of this Convention, Parties shall undertake to
    a. collect disaggregated relevant statistical data at regular intervals on cases of all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention;
    b. support research in the field of all forms of violence covered by the scope

of this Convention in order to study its root causes and effects, incidences, and conviction rates, as well as the efficacy of measures taken to implement this Convention.

2. Parties shall endeavor to conduct population-based surveys at regular intervals to assess the prevalence of and trends in all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention.
3. Parties shall provide the group of experts, as referred to in Article 66 of this Convention, with the information collected pursuant to this article in order to stimulate international co-operation and enable international benchmarking.
4. Parties shall ensure that the information collected pursuant to this article is available to the public.

This Article says that the state parties will take an active role in the investigation of the root causes and effects of the violence and ensure that these investigations are publicly accessible.

Chapter III – Prevention

Article 12 – General Obligations

1. Parties shall take the necessary measures to promote changes in the social and cultural patterns of behavior of women and men with a view to eradicating prejudices, customs, traditions, and all other practices that are based on the idea of the inferiority of women or on stereotyped roles for women and men.
2. Parties shall take the necessary legislative and other measures to prevent all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention by any natural or legal person.
3. Any measures taken pursuant to this chapter shall take into account and address the specific needs of persons made vulnerable by particular circumstances and shall place the human rights of all victims at their center.
4. Parties shall take the necessary measures to encourage all members of society, especially men and boys, to contribute actively to preventing all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention.
5. Parties shall ensure that culture, custom, religion, tradition, or so-called honor shall not be considered as justification for any acts of violence covered by the scope of this Convention.

6. Parties shall take the necessary measures to promote programs and activities for the empowerment of women.

What a humane Article—I can say that this one is my favorite. They aimed to block and eliminate anything and everything we call bigotry. I hope the new generation grows up with this perspective.

Article 13 – Awareness-Raising

1. Parties shall promote or conduct, on a regular basis and at all levels, awareness-raising campaigns or programs, including in co-operation with national human rights institutions and equality bodies, civil society, and non-governmental organizations, especially women's organizations, where appropriate, to increase awareness and understanding among the general public of the different manifestations of all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention, their consequences on children, and the need to prevent such violence.
2. Parties shall ensure the wide dissemination among the general public of information on measures available to prevent acts of violence covered by the scope of this Convention.

The trauma caused by violence against their mothers in front of their eyes is enormous for children. There have been many instances of this type of incidents in our country. According to this Article, studies should be conducted to raise public awareness of this issue. In any case, the state has to look out for the children's best interests.

Article 14 – Education

1. Parties shall take, where appropriate, the necessary steps to include teaching material on issues such as equality between women and men, non-stereotyped gender roles, mutual respect, non-violent conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships, gender-based violence against women and the right to personal integrity, adapted to the evolving capacity of learners, in formal curricula and at all levels of education.
2. Parties shall take the necessary steps to promote the principles referred to in paragraph 1 in informal educational facilities, as well as in sports, cultural and leisure facilities, and the media.

Article 15 – Training of Professionals

1. Parties shall provide or strengthen appropriate training for the relevant professionals dealing with victims or perpetrators of all acts of violence covered by the scope of this Convention, on the prevention and detection of such violence, equality between women and men, the needs and rights of victims, as well as on how to prevent secondary victimization.
2. Parties shall encourage that the training referred to in paragraph 1 includes training on co-ordinated multi-agency co-operation to allow for a comprehensive and appropriate handling of referrals in cases of violence covered by the scope of this Convention.

Article 16 – Preventive Intervention and Treatment Programs

1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to set up or support programs aimed at teaching perpetrators of domestic violence to adopt non-violent behavior in interpersonal relationships with a view to preventing further violence and changing violent behavioral patterns.
2. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to set up or support treatment programs aimed at preventing perpetrators, in particular sex offenders, from re-offending.
3. In taking the measures referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2, Parties shall ensure that the safety of, support for, and the human rights of victims are of primary concern and that, where appropriate, these programs are set up and implemented in close co-ordination with specialist support services for victims.

As you are aware, the implementation of this Article is critical for our country.

Article 17 – Participation of the Private Sector and the Media

1. Parties shall encourage the private sector, the information and communication technology sector and the media, with due respect for freedom of expression and their independence, to participate in the elaboration and implementation of policies and to set guidelines and self- regulatory standards to prevent violence against women and to enhance respect for their dignity.
2. Parties shall develop and promote, in co-operation with private sector actors, skills among children, parents and educators on how to deal with the information and communications environment that provides access to degrading content

of a sexual or violent nature which might be harmful.

It is the media that has the largest impact on the public's perception. As part of preventing violence against women and promoting women's dignity, this Article discusses how to work together with the media to deal with sexual and degrading violent content.

Chapter IV – Protection and Support

Article 18 – General Obligations

1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to protect all victims from any further acts of violence.
2. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures, in accordance with internal law, to ensure that there are appropriate mechanisms to provide for effective co-operation between all relevant state agencies, including the judiciary, public prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, local and regional authorities as well as non-governmental organizations and other relevant organizations and entities, in protecting and supporting victims and witnesses of all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention, including by referring to general and specialist support services as detailed in Articles 20 and 22 of this Convention.
3. Parties shall ensure that measures taken pursuant to this chapter shall
    - be based on a gendered understanding of violence against women and domestic violence and shall focus on the human rights and safety of the victim;
    - be based on an integrated approach which takes into account the relationship between victims, perpetrators, children and their wider social environment;
    - aim at avoiding secondary victimization;
    - aim at the empowerment and economic independence of women victims of violence;
    - allow, where appropriate, for a range of protection and support services to be located on the same premises;
    - address the specific needs of vulnerable persons, including child victims, and be made available to them.

4. The provision of services shall not depend on the victim's willingness to press charges or testify against any perpetrator.
5. Parties shall take the appropriate measures to provide consular and other protection and support to their nationals and other victims entitled to such protection in accordance with their obligations under international law.

This is a wonderful Article about protecting and supporting victims that notes all state institutions' active role in this regard. We wish that not only institutions of the state, but also humanity as a whole would act with the same awareness and sensitivity against all forms of violence.

Article 19 – Information

Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that victims receive adequate and timely information on available support services and legal measures in a language they understand.

It seems that this article aims to provide victims with information about the services they can access and the steps put in place to prevent violence. In this way, the victim of violence will know what measures have been taken and will feel protected by the state, thereby reducing trauma and fear that the victim experiences. Unfortunately, in our country, we see women posting on social media that they want to live or are afraid of dying and ask for help. Therefore, the state's support is crucial. The state stands up for every individual who is subjected to violence, regardless of gender or age. It takes action against the perpetrator in order to discourage people with a tendency to use violence.

Article 20 – General Support Services

1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that victims have access to services facilitating their recovery from violence. These measures should include, when necessary, services such as legal and psychological counselling, financial assistance, housing, education, training, and assistance in finding employment.
2. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that victims have access to health care and social services and that services are adequately resourced and professionals are trained to assist victims and refer them to the appropriate services.

A social state, as stated in this Article and some others, should provide support services to victims of violence. All social law states should assume these responsibilities, as I said.

Article 21 – Assistance in Individual/Collective Complaints

Parties shall ensure that victims have information on and access to applicable regional and international individual/collective complaints mechanisms. Parties shall promote the provision of sensitive and knowledgeable assistance to victims in presenting any such complaints.

This Article mentions that victims of violence have the right to file a complaint and which institutions of the state they can file this complaint with. It is, once again, one of the requirements of being a social state.

Article 22 – Specialist Support Services

1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to provide or arrange for, in an adequate geographical distribution, immediate, short- and long-term specialist support services to any victim subjected to any of the acts of violence covered by the scope of this Convention.
2. Parties shall provide or arrange for specialist women's support services to all women victims of violence and their children.

This Article is very useful; the victims of violence need expert support to help them overcome their trauma. It is important to do this immediately; especially victims of sexual violence may incline to commit suicide. Therefore, this Article is a must, like many of the above.

Article 23 – Shelters

Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to provide for the setting-up of appropriate, easily accessible shelters in sufficient numbers to provide safe accommodation for and to reach out pro-actively to victims, especially women and their children.

This Article was drafted in a clear and concise manner; ensuring adequate and easily accessible shelters for women and children fleeing violence is already one of the obligations of the state.

Article 24 – Telephone Helplines

Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to set up state-wide round-the- clock (24/7) telephone helplines free of charge to provide advice to callers, confidentially or with due regard for their anonymity, in relation to all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention.

In our country, 24/7 emergency support services are provided for the victims of violence on the phone lines 183, 0212 656 96 96, and 0549 656 96 96; so this Article is already implemented.

Article 25 – Support for Victims of Sexual Violence

Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to provide for the setting up of appropriate, easily accessible rape crisis or sexual violence referral centers for victims in sufficient numbers to provide for medical and forensic examination, trauma support, and counselling for victims.

I mentioned this above. Unfortunately, it is very common for victims of sexual violence to feel depressed and incline to commit suicide; therefore, these victims need serious expert support.

Article 26 – Protection and Support for Child Witnesses

1. Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that in the provision of protection and support services to victims, due account is taken of the rights and needs of child witnesses of all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention.
2. Measures taken pursuant to this article shall include age-appropriate psychosocial counselling for child witnesses of all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention and shall give due regard to the best interests of the child.

I have lost count of the children who witnessed the death of their mother in the hands of their father. It's heartbreaking to see those kids go without their parents; they need them more than anything else. However, one of them ends up in the grave and the other in prison. The child remains all alone, in a vulnerable state. As for children who have undergone trauma, I am not sure if they can

overcome them. The purpose of this Article is precisely to address this issue.

Article 27 – Reporting

Parties shall take the necessary measures to encourage any person witness to the commission of acts of violence covered by the scope of this Convention or who has reasonable grounds to believe that such an act may be committed, or that further acts of violence are to be expected, to report this to the competent organizations or authorities.

Because of our conscientious responsibility, we should say stop to injustice anyway, right? We must put ourselves in the shoes of the victims of violence, regardless of whether they are women, men, or children. We should not just pass by neglectfully with the perspective of "let sleeping dogs lie." As soon as we witness such a thing, we must call the police and ask them to come to the scene urgently. Then, until the police arrive, we must talk the parties out of such violence or calm them. If the violence continues, we should specifically state that the police have been informed, and if there are people around us, we should try to neutralize the perpetrator (without exercising any violence). Later, we should tell the authorities what we have seen and help the victim as a witness in order to protect the victim and to make the perpetrator receive the punishment he deserves and to prevent him from repeating the violence. Remember, the perpetrator is alone, but we are not. If we all approach with the same point of view and stand against violence, we will prevent violence together. This Article regulates the encouragement by the state of witnesses of violence to report this to the authorities.

Article 28 – Reporting by Professionals

Parties shall take the necessary measures to ensure that the confidentiality rules imposed by internal law on certain professionals do not constitute an obstacle to the possibility, under appropriate conditions, of their reporting to the competent organizations or authorities if they have reasonable grounds to believe that a serious act of violence covered by the scope of this Convention, has been committed and further serious acts of violence are to be expected.

This Article states that if the professional staff and professional groups have reasonable grounds for the occurrence and continuity of violence, the state will take measures to enable them to notify the competent authorities about this situation. This is already applied in our country. If there is violence, you do not

necessarily have to be among the professional staff to report the situation to the competent authorities. If any citizen witnesses any violence, they can call 155 and report it, and it is even the primary duty of every citizen to report it. Because when you know the violence and keep silent, it means that if the victim dies, then you are considered to have left her to die. With this consciousness, let us say, "STOP" to violence altogether.

Concluding Remarks

The "Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence," or also known as the "Istanbul Convention," consists of 12 chapters and 81 Articles. In order to show that the Convention does not actually contain any Article in contradiction with Turkish family culture, I have interpreted the Articles comprising the first four chapters of the Convention. To interpret the Convention in general:

- Although the name of the convention is "Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence," Article 4 of the Convention states that "Parties shall take the necessary legislative and other measures to promote and protect the right for **everyone, particularly women**, to live free from violence in both the public and the private sphere." Therefore, it is aimed in the Convention to protect the victim of violence, regardless of whether they are men, women, or children.
- It was mentioned that all institutions of the state should take the necessary precautions to actively help the victims of violence and provide trainings on this subject while raising the awareness of victims.

As can be seen, the Istanbul Convention has been prepared with a rather humanist perspective; there is not a single word in the Convention that could harm the Turkish family culture or our traditions. There is no reason to justify the withdrawal from the international convention that emphasizes the equality of men and women and aims to protect victims of violence. I did not come across a single word in the Convention that would require the urgent withdrawal from the Convention in the middle of the night, and that would otherwise cause irreparable damages.

Since the Istanbul Convention is an international convention and international conventions have the force of law in accordance with Article 90 of our Constitution, it is not a Convention that can be arbitrarily withdrawn from in the middle of the night. Just as you need to submit it to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM)

for the annulment of a law, it is similarly necessary to obtain approval from the TBMM for the termination of an international convention that has the force of law. Such a termination is a great disrespect to the will of both the TBMM and the people. The Istanbul Convention is designed to prevent violence not only against women, but also against all humanity, and it has the characteristics of fundamental rights and freedoms that have been acquired since 2011. Fundamental rights and freedoms may not be regulated by a decree issued at midnight as per Article 104 of our Constitution, nor can they be abolished by a decree. This so-called withdrawal is against the Constitution and the International Law; and in fact, it is invalid. Moreover, as the procedure for termination of the Convention was not followed, no application was made to the Secretariat General of the Council of Europe. In other words, the Convention is still in force.

For those who believe the Convention violates our customs, traditions, and family values, I ask: In what part of our tradition is there a rule allowing violence against women? Those who seek an excuse to belittle women and regards the empowerment of women as a danger, seeks to humiliate women even by exploiting our family values, customs, and traditions in their own way. This mentality tries to subdue women and imprison them in their own homes. However, it should always be remembered that these women would raise the next generation. The future generations of Turkey is in the hands of the beautiful women of this country.

I call out to the mentality that tries to normalize violence against women: it seems that you were so worried about where the contemporary lifestyle will lead Turkish women that you could not sleep at night, and thus you said we would rather withdraw from the Istanbul Convention. You cannot do everything you want and take our democratic rights away from us cursorily. We grew up reading the principles and revolutions of our beloved Atatürk and the history of the founding principles of the Republic that liberated women and set an example to the whole world. We will continue our struggle to carry them to the future with the same determination. We will not give up on our democracy.

Dear judges and prosecutors of the Courts of the Republic of Turkey: as you can see, the Convention is still in effect. Our duty as lawyers is to demand from the courts the implementation of international conventions that have the force of law in accordance with Article 90 of our Constitution and the protection of victims of violence. Your duty is to ensure that these conventions and laws are implemented by citing these conventions as a legal basis for your decision. It's your turn now. Together, let's protect the victims of violence.

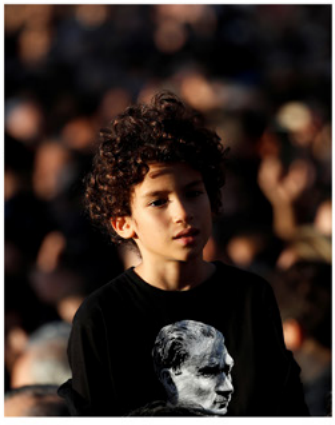
As a woman and a lawyer, I will never give up my fight for the Istanbul Convention. Through this article, I also address the members of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, who represent the will of the people. You should also not give up. To withdraw from the Istanbul Convention is to consider violence normal, to accept it, to view it as possible. In other words, it means denying security and safety to the person who has experienced violence. Together, let's put an end to the perpetrator. By remaining silent against violence, we leave the victim to die alone, to watch her die in silence. Every evening, we watch a news report about violence against women. There is a rightful due; we are all responsible for it.

I am calling on the media actors. Make no news that normalizes violence against women anymore. What happened to people caring about their partners in this country? Our desire now is to see the news of beautiful people who respect, care for, and love their partners. Let them serve as an example for the next generation.

The women's court has a huge responsibility as well. It is a fact that women are strong, ambitious, and smart. They will never give up on their dreams. I wish to live in a world where women are treated with love, compassion, and without psychological violence. With the children we raise, we will change the future. Those we raise will be upright individuals who treat others with love and compassion.

If you would like the author to comment on the rest of the Articles of the Istanbul Convention, you can send an e-mail to avukat@gozdehukuk.com.tr. In addition, Gözde Serbest Law and Consultancy firm works actively for female victims of violence. If you come across a victim of violence, you can reach the author and her colleagues through the above email address or at +90 216 350 03 43.

Journalism Unchained



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2020:
THE YEAR OF CHANGE

Once upon a time, I, just like many other proud, hardworking Americans, tended to be too busy making a living, never placing politics at the top of the daily list of "priorities." Things changed dramatically for me however with the candidacy of Donald J. Trump in the 2016 election season. Fast forward to four years later, 2020 became the year that I registered to vote as a Republican, because I knew that President Trump was fighting for good—and for us all.

Nancy Butler*

TPQ
Spring 2021

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On the day that Barack Obama was inaugurated as the President of the United States of America in 2009, I was asked this simple question: "So, what do you think about the first Black man being elected to the presidency?" I replied, "I am not impressed. It really does not matter what his ethnicity is. In my heart of hearts, I do not believe that he is a strong enough candidate to be a successful President of the United States." My first impression of President Obama was that he was a puppet. I did not know who his puppet master was at the time; certainly, time always reveals the truth sooner or later.

I do remember watching pre-election news footage of Senator Obama and thinking to myself, how honest of a person could he be? I formed this opinion because of the company that he was keeping. He seemed to be paraded around and pushed onto a pedestal by the likes of Bill and Hillary Clinton, as well as George Bush, senior and Jr., and other politicians and elites of the Democratic Party. It appeared as if there was an underlying agenda of some sort.

I did not truly know much about Obama prior to his inauguration. There were some instances that had occurred pre-election in 2008 that were a bit concerning regarding Barack Obama, such as the situation regarding his birth certificate. I did get that "pit in the stomach feeling" when he was confirmed as the President of the United States of America. It just did not sit right with me.

There were other instances that took place, things that "the powers that be" have tried, and to this day still attempt, to keep out of the public eye. If you do some simple research on Barack Obama, you will find several public articles that overpraise his accomplishments and achievements while in office.

If you dig a little deeper and know what information to include in your query, then the not so shiny moments in his life and career begin to emerge.

The 2004 pre-election race for the Senate took a sharp turn in favor of Obama, when his opponent, Jack Ryan dropped out of the race over allegations of sexual misconduct during his campaign.[1] Ryan was replaced with a different candidate, and Obama easily won the Senator seat of course.

Published researchers have found that non-citizens voted in the 2008 elections. Some agree that non-citizens tend to favor Democrats. It is believed that those votes may have been enough to impact the 2008 presidential election, in which Obama

[1] "Ryan Drops Out of Senate Race in Illinois After Sex Club Scandal," *Independent Record*, 26 June 2004, https://helenair.com/news/national/ryan-drops-out-of-senate-race-in-illinois-after-sex-club-scandal/article_32d67af3-bc56-56e8-b38a-1bbf70dfa544.html

won over his opponent John McCain.[2]

It is also alleged that illegal votes could have tipped North Carolina's 2008 presidential vote in favor of Barack Obama.[3] Voter identification laws were identified as not effective in preventing voter fraud, according to the research. This scenario resembles the current situation regarding the 2020 presidential election that recently took place in the United States of America.

> *"History has shown us that people and other government leaders tend to take advantage of world leaders who are perceived to be weak."*

The above instances are just a few of the situations that Obama has been involved in, publicly. It does not appear that he handled these issues with tact, honesty, and/or transparency.

If a presidential candidate is labeled as untrustworthy and dishonest, then that is a major sign of weakness. History has shown us that people and other government leaders tend to take advantage of world leaders who are perceived to be weak.

Prior to the first presidential campaign, Barack Obama was not a household name. Americans in general had truly little knowledge of who he was, where he came from, what major accomplishments he had achieved, and what principles he stood for. The Democrats introduced Obama to the world and hoped that everyone would instantly accept him, because they said so.

I, for one, saw past the façade on day one. To this day, many other issues and alleged crimes are finding their way to the surface that involve Barack Obama.

During the time of Barack Obama's presidency, I had never voted in a single political election. I had never been registered to vote as a citizen of the United States of America. I do not believe that I had enough confidence in any of the previous

[2] Elizabeth Llorente, "Non-citizen immigrants who voted in 2008 and 2010 may have swung elections," *Fox News*, 29 October 2014, https://www.foxnews.com/politics/non-citizen-immigrants-who-voted-in-2008-and-2010-may-have-swung-elections

[3] Stephen Gutowski, "Research Shows Voter Fraud May Have Swung Key 2008 Elections," *Washington Free Beacon*, 28 October 2014, https://freebeacon.com/politics/research-shows-voter-fraud-may-have-swung-key-2008-elections/

political candidates to give them my support as a voter.

As a single parent, I had the responsibility of raising my children on my own. The courts and child support service officials had deemed that it was not a prerequisite for the father of my children to pay child support while my children were residing in my single parent household. It was then that I realized I was not a victim. That I am a leader and not a follower. And that I am a strong woman. I was determined to take care of myself, and my children, without any assistance from the children's father and/or the state.

Since the moment that I made that decision, it has not been uncommon for me to simultaneously work in three careers. In the past, I had always been so focused on making a living that I never paid much attention to the news, politics, or the elections process. All the while, a little voice in the back of my mind knew that what was going on in the political arena was not right. I knew that the hard-working American people were not being treated fairly. There were just too many poor people, too many mistreated veterans, and too much homelessness. It has always been difficult for me to understand why there is so much despair in the world while the elites appear to be getting richer by the day.

When Donald J. Trump announced to the world that he was running for the presidency of the United States of America, I knew extraordinarily little about Mr. Trump.

Prior to the announcement, I had watched a few news stories and read a few articles about Donald J. Trump. I had listened to many musicians praise Trump in their songs as the success story that they all wanted to emulate. Like many other Americans, I watched his reality TV show "The Apprentice." That is when I was exposed to his business ethics and gained a glimpse of his family life. It seemed that the more the public embraced Donald J. Trump, the more opposition he received from the media. Note the fact that Mr. Trump had always appeared in the spotlight with politicians, government officials, musicians, actors, elites, and many others prior to his announcement of candidacy.

Prior to Trump's bid for presidency, I was so wrapped up in my own life that I did not invest much thought into the whole pre-election process. I did begin to realize that the 2016 election process was unlike any of the previous elections that I had been accustomed to witnessing. The news coverage appeared to be more biased against Donald J. Trump. Social media outlets over-publicized a skewed election process. Against all odds, when Donald J. Trump was elected as the 45th President of the United States of America in 2016, the Democrats, along with Hillary Clinton,

seemed to immediately lose their minds. I had never seen a political party and its voters act in this manner regarding any of the prior elections. It was very unsettling to watch. Many of the Democratic politicians openly boycotted the inauguration ceremony of President Donald Trump.

> *"It has always been difficult for me to understand why there is so much despair in the world while the elites appear to be getting richer by the day."*

Donald J. Trump's Presidency

On day one of Trump's presidency, the media news sources announced that impeachment proceedings were on the horizon. The Democrats, along with the then leader of the House, Nancy Pelosi, had decided that they were going to do whatever possible to get President Trump out of the White House. Hillary Clinton opposed the results of the election, as she vehemently proclaimed that Russian collusion had taken place during the election process. She felt cheated. It was claimed after the first impeachment of President Trump that the collusion story was, in fact, a hoax and therefore unfounded.

During the first year of Donald Trump's presidency, friends and associates began to ask me, "What do you think of the Trump presidency?" Since I did not know much about Trump and his presidency, only the few, mainly negative, things that were being repeated about him by the media, the Democrats, and the opposition, I could only speak from what I was experiencing at the time. Every time I was asked about my views regarding President Trump, at the time, which happened on several occasions, I would state the following, "President Trump is the better of two evils. From the past stories and situations that I heard about Hillary Clinton, apparently, she has been involved in many unspeakable acts, and therefore there is no way she should be running our country." I told everyone that they should work diligently to make as much money as possible and save as much as they can while President Trump is in office, because if the Democrats have their way and get control back, America will be in big trouble.

It became obvious over time that while Donald J. Trump was the President of the United States, my morale went up. My wages went up. The customers I dealt with were happier and tended to spend more money than they had in the past. I was happier, my family seemed happier, and my fellow employees appeared to be happier. The housing market was on its way upward. And I did not feel such an

urgency to have to work so hard all the time. Life was getting much better for me and those around me.

I watched, fellow Americans watched, and other nations watched as many of the Democrats and opposition attempted to divide the country by repeating false, disparaging remarks regarding President Trump. It seemed as if there was a witch hunt going on. The more policies that were put in place to help the American people and the world, the worse the media's false narrative against President Trump became. At first it made me angry. I became furious. Then, I began to get curious as to why the left was so adamant to get rid of President Trump.

The Coronavirus Pandemic and President Trump's Response

By that time in January of 2020, I was finally making a comfortable living at my main career. I was not as stressed about my financial situation as I was during the previous administrations. I had also acquired my Nevada Realtors license and signed a contract with a brokerage to begin business as a salesperson. Meanwhile, because I am a musical artist, I was in the process of setting up show dates in Nevada. Then I heard the news about the coronavirus outbreak from Wuhan for the first time.

I paid it extraordinarily little attention because for one, I was too busy working on my life, and two, the WHO reassured the world that the virus would not escape from China, and that we should go on with our daily lives as normal. So that is what I did—until I began watching "smuggled" videos from China that showed people dying in the streets and being pulled out of their homes against their will to be dragged into medical institutions when they, apparently, tested positive for the virus, and stories of singled out Chinese health officials who were desperately trying to get the news out to the world about the devastation of the virus against the will of the Chinese party officials.

In February of 2020, there was a nationwide announcement that Americans were heading for a 14-day lockdown in order to slow down the spread of the virus. Shortly after that national announcement, the governor of Nevada, Steve Sisolak, announced that the state was going into a mandated 14-day quarantine to slow the spread of the virus.

The mandated quarantine meant for me, personally, that I could no longer travel to New York to work on my main career. And it meant that I could not see my family. I could not begin my career as a realtor in Nevada because everything was closing for a while, and that, during the quarantine, I could not perform as a musician because

live stage performances were forbidden. The uncertainty of being able to make a living began to weigh heavily on me. During that time, most of the world was in the same predicament. After pondering the situation, I applied for statewide unemployment insurance, and was denied. By the grace of God, I was granted Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, which is provided by the federal government.

"The more policies that were put in place to help the American people and the world, the worse the media's false narrative against President Trump became."

President Trump, in my opinion, seemed determined to help the American people in whatever way he could. He started appearing in daily press conferences in order to keep the Americans abreast of the pandemic situation. He was adamant that the Congress and the Senate work on bills to release emergency funding to the American people as soon as possible in the form of economic stimulus checks, pandemic unemployment assistance, additional funding for statewide unemployment insurance, loans for small businesses, and more. President Trump also put together a team of health officials to guide the nation on how to deal with the virus and created a network to gather and mass-produce the medical supplies that nurses, doctors, and patients needed while combating the virus.

As I watched all the steps that President Trump took to save as many lives as he could during the pandemic, I began to gain a greater respect for the type of person and businessman that he is. Before my very own eyes, I watched the Democratic Congress and senators fight many of the good things that President Trump was attempting to implement for the American people during the pandemic crisis. Nancy Pelosi opposed everything that was presented to Congress by loyal Republicans and President Trump. Her fellow constituents stood behind every despicable decision that Pelosi made. Pelosi even held back the stimulus package from the American people during the pandemic crisis, on purpose, on several occasions.[4]

Conclusion

Since the pandemic crisis occurred and a long-term lockdown was set in place,

[4] Libby Emmons, "Nancy Pelosi Admits She Blocked Covid Relief Bill for Months," *Post Millennial*, 4 December 2020, https://thepostmillennial.com/watch-nancy-pelosi-admits-she-blocked-covid-relief-bill-for-months

many out of work Americans had a chance to do research regarding the deeper truth behind the virus, the lockdowns, the health officials pushing the lockdowns, the WHO, the CDC, the FDA, the US government and politicians, Big Pharma, Big Tech, the 2020 pre-election season, the 2020 election fraud/interference, as well as the accused elite pedophile and sex-trafficking rings that came to the surface during this period. I honestly do believe that, had I never been placed into a nationwide lockdown, then I would have continued to be preoccupied with working instead of realizing many of the atrocities that were and still are being committed against me, my fellow Americans, and the inhabitants of this world.

Once the veil was lifted from my eyes, I realized that I am in fact a MAGA supporter. I am a Trump supporter. This is the defining moment when I decided to make a change and be heard if I could. I therefore registered to vote, as a Republican, in the 2020 election.

There is a war of good vs. evil taking place in the world right now. In my heart of hearts, I do believe that President Trump is fighting for good. And so am I.

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EXTREMISM IN PAKISTAN: CAUSES & REMEDIES

The democratic credentials and institutions of Pakistan are explained as weak because of the division within society between modern secular and traditional religious positions. Today, the society of Pakistan faces the issue of religious extremism. While attempting to identify the causes of violent extremism and the socio-economic conditions, class divisions, and societal inequalities that direct Pakistanis toward extremism and militancy, this article argues that education is the most important solution that will save Pakistani society from the ills of extremism.

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TPQ
Spring 2021

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Extremism is a worldwide phenomenon and no nation is free of it. However, the essence of extremism varies from society to society as a result of socio-economic opportunities. In economically rich societies the prospects of extremism will be different. But the threat of extremism becomes serious when society is backward, undeveloped, and illiterate. It is difficult for Pakistan to deal with these matters and issues of terrorism and violence without dealing with extremist thoughts and ideologies. Extremism has spread at various levels to destabilize the country's social structure and badly damage the peaceful development in each sector. Pakistan has been suffering different forms of extremism such as religious intolerance and ethnic and sectarian violence for some time now.[1]

Radicalism has taken profound roots in Pakistani society due to poor administration and lack of equity. However, the investigation into the reasons for radicalism is just limited to the foundations of issues; knowledge regarding the drivers of fanaticism is insufficient. Although issues such as poverty, joblessness, welfare, and illiteracy are significant contributing components, they have not been investigated adequately.[2] Socio-economic problems combined with ideological extremism provide a fertile ground for violent extremism and terrorism.

In the 1980s Islamization dominated Pakistan's foreign and domestic policy. Pakistan became the United States' partner against the Soviet Union in 1979 when the Western forces were supporting traditional political sections against those with leftist inclinations. Pakistan covertly upheld conservative components to restrain the developing impact of liberals and their collaboration with China, the Soviet Union, and communist Islamic nations.[3]

Extremism & Socio-Economic Complications in Pakistan

In today's world, there is sufficient consciousness of financial problems and societal inequalities. The joblessness rate and expanding poverty has created an environment of insecurity and a feeling of hardship and dissatisfaction, leading the general public toward crimes and intolerance. Pakistan's culture has distinctive social and linguistic variety, financial imbalances, and class differences. The most powerful factor in society is the strength of the feudal and tribal so-

[1] Moonis Ahmar, "The Challenge of Extremism in Pakistan: Are There Lessons to be Learnt from the Experience from Singapore?" *IPRI Journal,* Vol. 11, No. 2 (July-August 2011), p. 44.

[2] Muhammad Khurshid Khan, "Analyzing Domestic Terrorism as a Threat to Pakistan Security and the Policy Response," *IPRI Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Summer 2009), pp. 49-76.

[3] Eamon Murphy & Ahmad Rashid Malik, "Pakistan Jihad: The Making of Religious Terrorism," *IPRI Journal,* Vol. 9, No. 2 (Summer 2009), pp. 17-31.

cial structure with male-centric and authoritarian patterns. The social manner is formed by these patterns that are evident in a culture of control and restrictive overpower and assets.[4] When basic necessities such as shelter, food, and clothing are not satisfied the state starts to face larger problems, including radicalism. At the point when these issues are not tended to the ideal, they evolve into a danger for the nation. In this world it is difficult to recognize any ideal society; each nation has its own social and economic issues. But Pakistan's issues are at disturbing levels and has severely escalated in the general public.

> *"Radicalism has taken profound roots in Pakistani society due to poor administration and lack of equity."*

Poverty

One of Pakistan's main issues is poverty. The division of urban and rural poverty patterns are a significant component of Pakistani society. The majority of poor people live in rural areas and do not have access to the necessities of life.[5] Illiteracy, food crises, lack of health facilities, and large family sizes are some of the prevalent aspects of rural poverty.[6] The feelings of hardship lead to fanaticism, shortfall of trust, and self-destruction. Furthermore, poverty encourages illegal terrorization by providing an ethical legitimization. It upholds militant strategies among masses by contributing to disparities and prompting savagery and fanaticism. Radicals use poverty as an instrument to execute their brutal activities to receive support from the general population.

The Class Distinction

The Pakistani people have been divided into the lower, center, or privileged. Because of unequal monetary strategies, the rich become more profligate while the poor become poorer. The class differentiation additionally prompts misuse. The rich class is constantly exploiting the poor class, gathering more wealth at the expense of the poor. Pakistan also faces the issue of overpopulation—the growth rate is high and among the most noteworthy in the world. The rapid growth of the populace has been the main problem and worry for all legislatures, as providing for the necessities of an enormous populace with limited assets is difficult.

[4] Asad, "Socio Economic Problems of Pakistan," *Leisure Notebook*, 9 September 2013, http://leisurenotebook.blogspot.com/2013/09/socio-economic-problems-of-pakistan.html

[5] International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), see: http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/web/guess/country/home/tags/pakistan

[6] Ibid.

Bad Governance and Political Instability

Pakistan is fronting issues in governance as well. The poor performance of public institutions paralyzes the country's administration and leads to economic and political disorder. The government needs to approach societal representatives to successfully address the issues of their communities.

Two things are integral in the governance process: people and performance. People raise their voice for policymakers to fulfill their needs. In democratic countries, the people and the government together play an important role for good governance. If a state is weak, it fails to perform good governance. Good governance allows state institutions to play their role in the enhancement of society,[7] in contrast to political leaders and parliamentarians who have lost their credibility among the general population.

Ever since religious extremism emerged, both political and military rule have weakened the strength of Pakistan's democratic and political institutions. The individual's involvement in legislative issues is limited, and the state structure does not permit serving the majority rule and their needs. As a result, the majority of the individuals of Pakistan do not abide by the decisions of elites and politicians. They instead search for support from the clan, family, and religious groups, weakening the state and its institutions. State resources and lust for power lead to even some parties receiving the support of extremist groups and being lenient toward these groups. Some extremist groups also take advantage of Pakistan's weak judicial system. Pakistan has had a weak political system and lack of sincere leadership since Quaid-e-Azam's death, and has since lost its political track. Lack of leadership and highly incompetent politicians and administrators have damaged the country's basic foundations and democratic institutions. These reasons have led to the split of society and the consequential weakening of state foundations, creating the vacuum in which terrorism flourishes today.[8]

Education

Education is the fundamental tool for any society or nation to develop. Education creates knowledge and the capability to deal with the challenges of this globalized world. Just as the state structure, the education system in Pakistan is also weak. The political elites have failed to provide better educational opportunities to the people. The literacy rate is still very low—59 percent—including those who just read

[7] Goran Hyden, Julius Court, and Kenneth Mease, *Making Sense of Governance: Empirical Evidence from 16 Developing Countries* (New Delhi: Viva Books Pvt. Ltd., 2005), p. 3.

[8] Muhammad Irshad, "Terrorism in Pakistan: Causes and Remedies," *The Dialogue Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (July 2011).

and write their names in Urdu.[9] Extremist groups exploit the absence of modern education and take young children to their madrassas to impose hate toward other communities. These young children ultimately come out with extremist ideas and a militant mindset, becoming a severe threat to society. The enrollment ratio of students at the primary level has shown a decreasing trend. In fact, approximately 50 percent of children do not even complete their primary education.[10] The lack of education and high illiteracy rate has made Pakistan vulnerable to extremism and terrorism. Technical education in particular is very important especially in the rural regions of the country. The system suffers from insufficient investment in the education sector, institutional incapability, and the poor curriculum that often provokes intolerance.

> *"Ever since religious extremism emerged, both political and military rule have weakened the strength of Pakistan's democratic and political institutions."*

The Afghan War

Throughout history, Pakistan-Afghan relations have confronted different ups and downs and the absence of common trust and mutual understanding. Pakistan needs harmony and peace at any expense, as Pakistan has been the nation affected most from the Afghan war. Pakistan has indeed welcomed displaced Afghans during the various intercessions of foreign forces; however, Pakistan faces numerous internal security issues now. The huge presence of Afghan refugees has led to internal insecurity and financial issues for the state. Pakistan's international strategy toward Afghanistan is dependent on the end of the civil war, its harmony, cultural improvement, and the foundation of a strong government that includes every single Afghan stakeholder. External interference in Afghanistan in 1979 during the USSR occupation extremely damaged Pakistan's stability, causing an enormous increase in militancy, weaponization, and drug trafficking in Pakistan.

9/11 and Its Impacts on Pakistan

The prolonged global reflection on Islamic militancy after 11 September 2001, and, specifically, the US invasion of Afghanistan has had a transformative impact on Pakistan and its homegrown invaders. General Musharraf was among the

[9] The World Bank, "Literacy rate, adult total (% of people ages 15 and above) – Pakistan," https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.ZS?locations=PK

[10] Muhammad Adil, "Socio Economic Problems of Pakistan," *Hamari Web*, 9 November 2012, https://hamariweb.com/articles/26453

first remote pioneers to have received a clarion call from Washington: "You are either with us or against us" was the message.[11] In addition to its political history already embroiled in endemic crises and challenges that no other country has ever experienced, Pakistan faced a set of different troubles, both internal and external, with the tragedies of 9/11. After 9/11, the scars of the American-headed war on terror have been concretely observable in Pakistan.

Role of Saudi Arabia and Iran in Spreading Radical Islam

According to Professor Vali Nasr, the main basis of funding to export the radical image of Islam is Saudi Arabia. Several organizations have been established to promote the radical version of Islam across the Muslim world; these groups take huge financial sustenance to spread their extremist version and interpretation of Islam.[12] The refugees from Afghanistan who came to Pakistan due to the bloody war in their own country were re-located to refugee camps set up in Pakistan. During the Cold War, the US and Saudi Arabia supported schools within these camps, as they provided a way to continue recruits for the US-backed Afghan opposition against the Soviets. Although the importance of religious schools for Western powers decreased after the end of the war, Saudi Arabia continued its funding, therefore, the number of religious schools has increased.[13]

Saudi Arabia is the most important country in the Muslim world; its strong influence is felt in both regional and global affairs. Both Saudi Arabia and Iran have different approaches and policies toward many regional issues. These two countries have a kind of rivalry that stems from their objectives, powers, and interests in the Muslim world. Unfortunately, their policies badly affect the societal circles and stability within Muslim countries. Pakistan has also been affected by these policies that promote religious extremism and sectarianism within its borders. According to WikiLeaks reports, former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that Saudi Arabia is the largest source of funds for extremist groups in Pakistan,[14] but the Saudi government is reluctant to cut the financial support for these groups, including the Taliban. The report further states that some other Arab countries also provide source of funding for militant and extremist groups. The most ignored factor in the conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan is that the violence is partly supported by the Arab conservatives whose

[11] Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir* (New York: Free Press, 2006), p. 201.

[12] "Saudi Time Bomb? An interview with Vali Nasr," *Frontline PBS*, 25 October 2001, https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saudi/interviews/nasr.html

[13] Hussain Haqqani, "Islam's Medieval Outposts," *Foreign Policy,* 10 November 2009, https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/11/10/islams-medieval-outposts/

[14] David Morgan, "WikiLeaks: Saudis largest source of terror funds," *CBS News*, 5 December 2010, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/wikileaks-saudis-largest-source-of-terror-funds/

governments do nothing to cut their funds.[15] Washington is critical of Saudi Arabia's refusal to ban such funds in the name of charities; intelligence suggests that these groups continue to provide financial support and fund extremism overseas.[16]

> *"The lack of education and high illiteracy rate has made Pakistan vulnerable to extremism and terrorism."*

Since the Islamic revolution in Iran, there have been many ups and downs in Pakistan-Iran relations. These unstable relations were cultivated by the sectarian violence of the Taliban groups. As a result, sectarian violence was carried out by the different extremist groups within Pakistan against Iranian interests. Pakistan has become the playground for Iran-Saudi proxy wars. These two countries are supporting their respective groups on a sectarian basis for their interests and expansionism, which is consequently damaging the pluralistic and peaceful societal structure in Pakistan. Pakistan and Iran have differences over the Afghan conflict: while Pakistan supported the Taliban government in Afghanistan, Iran opposed it.[17]

Although they both feel their common interest in the Afghan issue has been realized after the collapse of the Taliban regime, Pakistan and Iran have yet to cooperate on top policy issues. For example, Pakistan has security concerns about the growing role of India in neighboring regions, especially the Indo-Iranian joint projects regarding Afghanistan's infrastructure and development. The expansion of Indian consulates in Zahedan near the Pakistan border is also viewed as a concern and worry in Islamabad.[18] Yet, the fundamental component in building friendly relations between Pakistan and Iran are the people-to-people interactions between those whom share a common cultural heritage and history. To strengthen further relations it is important to respect and understand each other's interests and cooperate accordingly. Academics, exchange of programs, and joint research programs are some of the areas Pakistan and Iran must cooperate.

Conclusion

Religious extremism and terrorism were present in our society well before the

[15] Declan Walsh, "Wiki Leaks Cables Portray Saudi Arabia as a Cash Machine for Terrorists," *Guardian*, 5 December 2010, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/de/05/wikileakscables-saudi-terrorist-funding

[16] Ibid.

[17] Nadeem Ahmad Moonakal, "The Challenges and Inconsistencies of the Iran-Pakistan Relationship," *E-International Relations*, 31 July 2020, https://www.e-ir.info/2020/07/31/the-challenges-and-inconsistencies-in-the-iran-pakistan-relationship/

[18] Nasim Zehra, "Pakistan-Iran Relations: Compulsions and Conditions for a Strategic Relationship," *Strategic Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Spring 2003), pp. 86-8.

United States entered Afghanistan. Pakistan was struggling with religious extremism and extremist groups of different sects well before 9/11. This struggle continues today, as hate-filled, prejudiced, and misogynistic speeches and preaching of religious leaders continue to increase religious extremism and intolerance in Pakistani society. Everyone considers it as their responsibility to judge others' piety; this self-assumed mentality puts the lives of ordinary people in danger.

In addition to the instability and poor performance of political parties, the unequal distribution of power and resources from the center to provinces contributes to political instability. Moreover, since countries that lack resources are not able to deal with multi-ethnic societies, political instability becomes a big hurdle for nation-building in developing and underdeveloped countries. Democracy is failing due to the political chaos and volatility in third world countries. Different interests and pressure groups are fighting each other for power and their political objectives.

The performance of religious political parties in elections throughout the history of Pakistan has been poor. However, the failure of mainstream political parties in revitalizing politics, economics, and society, and hopes of establishing an Islamic order and a system of justice and equality attracted some people to the religious forces. Yet, people are increasingly becoming wary of sectarian violence, confrontational politics, intolerant attitudes, and the militant tendencies of religious segments of society.

Recommendations

Extremism, which creates instability, is an important issue in every society and country. Extremism has different forms such as religious, political, and sectarian, which has become the most important threat for the state of Pakistan. The Pakistani Government therefore needs to

- understand and define the nature and repercussions of extremism;
- differentiate the militant groups according to their agendas;
- improve the capabilities of armed forces;
- arrange youth development programs.

The conservative elites and clergy whom have a strong influence in Pakistan have never encouraged the growth of a liberal democratic culture and its institutions. Any counter-terrorism policy or peaceful and progressive culture can only succeed and be sustained if liberal values such as freedom of expression, individualism, and moderation are allowed to flourish in the country. Both print and digital media should encourage interfaith dialogues for sectarian harmony and tolerance.

As a result, the Pakistani Government also needs to

- prioritize fighting extremism;
- strengthen democratic institutions;
- work for a pluralistic and progressive society;
- balance the relationship between religion and state like the Turkish model;
- improve the educational curriculum and execute radical reforms;
- develop the agriculture sector;
- play a constructive role regarding the Afghan issue;
- pressurize the US and the Afghan governments to limit the Indian role in Afghanistan;
- implement administrative and political reforms in the tribal region.

According to Professor Ömer Taşpınar, social and economic development is an important and basic requirement for democratization, noting educational and economic empowerment as the best solution against extremism.[19] Disappointment also causes violent terrorism, as any individual who is not satisfied with their ruling leaders and realizes that his rights are not fulfilled diverges toward any organization in hope for a better life. In addition to the lack of quality and modern education, limited economic opportunities make an ordinary person a target for extremist groups. Education is therefore the most important solution that will rescue the nation from these ills.

[19] Ömer Taşpınar, "Fighting Radicalism not 'Terrorism': Root Causes of an International Actor Redefined," *SAIS Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (2009), pp. 75-86.

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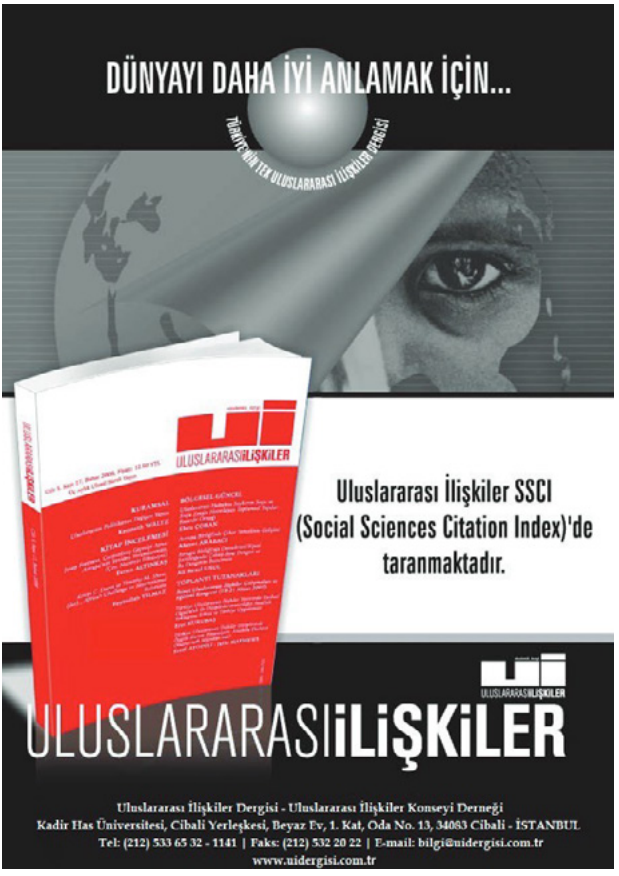

BOOK REVIEW: PUSTO TURSKO

In Pusto tursko, Darko Tanasković explores the current state of affairs in Turkey, from the country's memory politics, through problems within the government, all the way to its foreign policy. As the author is one of the most distinguished Oriental scholars and a diplomat who has served as the Ambassador of Yugoslavia to Turkey, the work offers a lot of insight on modern-day Turkey. However, the book also has serious problems, especially in the way it is being perceived in Serbia, the author's home country. It is only a matter of time before it is translated into other languages and has a serious impact due to the author's prominence. Because of that, the aim of this critical review is to put forward Pusto tursko's qualities, but also point out some flaws in the approach to the subject matter and help provide a clear picture of what the book actually represents.

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Professor Dr. Darko Tanasković is a well-known Serbian scholar, translator, and diplomat. He was a professor at the University of Belgrade's Faculty of Philology for over 30 years before retiring in 2018, even serving as the head of the Department of Oriental Languages, Literatures, and Cultures for a time. During his diplomatic career, which lasted from 1995 to 2018, he served as an Ambassador of Serbia (formerly of Yugoslavia) to Turkey, Azerbaijan, the Holy See, the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, and to UNESCO. All of this makes for an impressive career, and while no one would bring this into question, including myself, one has to look critically at his work just as one would at anyone else's.

Ever since Edward Said published his iconic book *Orientalism*, scholars have been diligent when dealing with the "Orient." Said showed the dangers around approaching the "Orient" as a place on its own, as it represents a figment of Western imagination—a grouping of diverse peoples and cultures into one fictional entity. Unfortunately, Tanasković's own approach to scholarship is grounded in this pre-Said approach, where a scholar becomes an expert on "the Orient," which does not exist on its own. During his long and prolific career, Tanasković has written on everything "Oriental"; from his PhD dissertation and book on the Arabic language in Tunisia and works on the grammar of Arabic, through works on Islam and a Turkish–Serbian dictionary, which he co-authored, all the way to his recent works on the foreign policy of Turkey. A person with substantial intellectual abilities such as Tanasković can become an expert in different subjects. However, the problem is in the very "Orientalistic" approach Tanasković has in his scholarship, which brings us to his most recent book: *Pusto tursko*.[1]

Pusto tursko is not Tanasković's first book on Turkey's foreign policy and politics. He previously published *Neoosmanizam: doktrina i spoljnopolitička praksa* (English: *Neo-Ottomanism: A Doctrine and Foreign Policy Practice*[2]). As the title suggests, the book deals with Turkey's foreign policy, which the author, like many others, labels as "neo-Ottoman." Since *Pusto tursko* is being promoted as a "collection of works written after the publication of *Neoosmanizam*" and is about the same subject, his previous work also has to be mentioned here.[3]

Both *Pusto tursko* and *Neoosmanizam* have a quite evident tone of "Orientalism" about which Said warns us. In both books, Tanasković examines Turkey's state

[1] Darko Tanasković, *Pusto tursko,* (Belgrade: Informatika AD, Institute of European Studies, & Institute for Political Networking, 2020).

[2] Darko Tanasković, *Neo-Ottomanism: A Doctrine and Foreign Policy Practice* (Belgrade: Citizens' Association "CIVIS", 2013).

[3] J. T., "'Pusto tursko' u Atrijumu Narodnog muzeja ['Pusto tursko' in the Atrium of the National Museum]," *Danas*, 26 February 2021, https://www.danas.rs/kultura/pusto-tursko-u-atrijumu-narodnog-muzeja/

sponsored ideology and foreign policy as something rather unique and distinct. He writes in *Neoosmanizam*, and implies in *Pusto tursko*, that Turkey's foreign policy is imperialistic, as the county chooses to maintain relations with countries it has historical ties to because of the Ottoman Empire. Tanasković notes that there is a clear wish to bring back the Ottoman Empire in some form as Turkey promotes its culture and language in former territories, while also providing aid to countries in those territories in order to assert dominance over them. Tanasković builds logically sound arguments on these grounds, but what his approach in *Neoosmanizam* and *Pusto tursko* lacks is a very simple comparative analysis.

Tanasković's arguments are built on the rather old "Orientalistic" approach that treats Turkey as the "Other." This is clear as he wrote two books that deal with Turkey's foreign policy, but never once compared its characteristics to that of other countries. For example, how is the fact that Turkey maintaining relations with countries with which it has historical ties proof of an imperialistic foreign policy while the United Kingdom's efforts are not? When Turkey promotes its culture and language in former territories, this is perceived as a wish to reestablish the Ottoman Empire, but when France does the same thing in Africa it does not have a wish to reestablish its former colonial empire? How can Turkey's development aid be an instrument of an imperialistic agenda while the development aid provided by the United Kingdom, France, or even that of the United States, Germany, and other countries is not? Looking at the country's foreign policy, Turkey does the exact same things many other countries do, but its cardinal sin of not being "Western" prompts authors such as Tanasković to treat it differently than other countries.

However, *Pusto tursko* deals with many other topics in addition to Turkey's foreign policy. Aside from the foreword by Miša Đurković, the book has 21 chapters and every one of them deals with a different subject matter, including:

- Turkey's approach to the First Balkan War and the First World War
- Turkey's involvement in the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia
- The place of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the neo-Ottoman project
- Faults in the academic work of Ahmet Davutoğlu
- Neo-Ottomanism; "Erdoganism"
- Conflicts within the Justice and Development Party
- The 2016 Turkish coup d'état attempt and the newly created Democracy and National Unity Day
- The return of the trilateral cooperation between Bosnia, Serbia, and Turkey
- The conversion of Hagia Sophia back into a mosque

There are other chapters as well, such as "If Erdogan is the host in Syria, what is Assad?" and "Are the Balkans Ottoman Penelope?". However, the above-mentioned general themes make up most of the book.

A Monograph or Collection of Essays?

Looking at all of these themes, it is difficult to classify Tanasković's book. After all, it is next to impossible to classify it as a monograph since it is not a specialist work on a single subject. The author deals with anything and everything which caught his attention—from Turkish pilots in the NATO bombing all the way to memory politics in Turkey. Luckily, the book contains the reviewers' notes which state that "the manuscript of the scientific monograph of Professor Dr. Darko Tanasković *Pusto tursko* is made up of 21 essay/chapters […] which deal with a wide array of phenomena regarding the Turkish–Islamic synthesis (or neo-Ottomanism in foreign policy) in contemporary Turkey."[4] While calling it a scientific monograph on the "Turkish–Islamic synthesis," the reviewer himself treats the chapters like individual essays, which is understandable considering that each one represents a thematic whole that does not have much to do with the one preceding or succeeding it. Yet, judging by the notes, it remains unclear whether the book should be treated as a scientific monograph or a collection of essays.

I, for one, would argue that it should be treated as the latter, especially since a significant number of these essay/chapters do not cite any literature or sources, and some were even published in tabloid newspapers and web portals such as *Blic* and *Sve o Srpskoj*.[5] It is hard to consider *Pusto tursko* a serious scientific monograph knowing that a significant portion of it was previously published in tabloids, but when analyzing parts of it, the lack of a scientific approach becomes even clearer.

Take for instance the essay (from this point onward the book will be treated as a collection of essays) on Turkey's involvement in the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia. The author, who served as the Ambassador of Yugoslavia to Turkey at the time, states that "President Süleyman Demirel, be it unofficially, told the author of these here lines at least twice that Turkey [...] could never support the breaching of the territorial integrity of other countries."[6] This is permissible if the author is writing for a wider audience, but there is no place for "I was told by X" when writing a serious academic work in historiography and political science, even if the author served as an ambassador. Similarly, the fact that the author refers to President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan through the book simply as "Sultan" is permissible if the book was

[4] Tanasković (2020), p. 167.

[5] Tanasković (2020), pp. 178-9.

[6] Tanasković (2020), pp. 45-6.

intended for a wider audience, but if the attempt was to write a monograph, which offers an objective scholarly analysis, there is no place for such labeling.

One can also look at other essays such as the one on Bosnia and Herzegovina within the larger framework of neo-Ottomanism, where Tanasković tries to lay out the "coordinates" of the doctrine stating in the first one of the nine coordinates that "neo-Ottomanism is real, and not a product of wrong interpretation [...] Neo-Ottomanism isn't a prejudice nor a mystification, but an easily provable fact."[7] Just stating that something is an "an easily provable fact" in social sciences is problematic, but even more problematic is the fact that the author just accepted neo-Ottomanism as a "fact" and built his entire case on it without even once questioning the foundation he is building his work on.

The whole book shares this fundamental flaw. Tanasković took a claim he regards as true and laid out arguments in support of it without questioning the claim itself—he took a pseudoscientific approach in which a researcher just looks for additional arguments in support of his claim instead of testing his initial hypothesis. Rather than questioning the existence of neo-Ottomanism, as the scientific method requires, he took it as "a fact" and wrote *Pusto tursko* in order to support his "fact." Even the name of the book itself points to this: there is no way to translate "pusto tursko" into English, it roughly means "everything Turkish" but with a rather negative connotation. After all, the book itself does not even have a main argument to it. Aside from claiming that neo-Ottomanism exists as an ideology and foreign policy, and listing completely different things in support of this, the book is a collection of different essays that deal with anything and everything which the book's Serbian readership will find as "neo-Ottoman" or, in other words, "bad." From Turkey's support of the independence of Kosovo, through its role in the NATO bombing, all the way to Hagia Sophia being converted into a mosque, all these actions represent something negative for the Serbian people, whom already have a somewhat strained relationship with Turkey due to Serbia's Ottoman past—a period which represents the "dark ages" in Serbian collective memory—and Turkey's support of Kosovo's independence—a very sore spot for Serbia.

Of course, the fact that the topics in question represent "something negative" does not mean that one should not write about them; in fact, precisely because they represent a source of tension one has to research and write about them. For this reason, Tanasković's book represents an important source when analyzing the relations between Turkey and Serbia, Turkey's foreign policy, and ideology in Turkey. The problem, however, is that the book is being treated as an outstanding work of

[7] Tanasković (2020), p. 54.

scholarship that proves neo-Ottomanism, when in reality, it does not. Quite the opposite, rather than questioning and analyzing the claim of neo-Ottomanism, the book builds arguments in support of it. As such, although it can be a very important work and I for one will agree that it is one, it cannot be an outstanding scholarly work.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the essays written by Tanasković represent quality writing. They are well structured, have arguments, and offer the reader insight into various topics regarding Turkey today. His work on memory politics has merit. He points the reader toward potential future research, stating that "it would be interesting, for instance, to do a comparative analysis of the ways in which diplomatic missions of Turkey abroad organized manifestations to celebrate June 15."[8] Tanasković's essays regarding the re-Islamization of Turkey are also quite informative. However, we must bear in mind that good as they might be, they do not represent a scholarly analysis. As one reviewer noted about the book, "it is a valuable reading matter for diplomats, politicians and businessmen who deal with the events in Turkey and in that part of the world"[9]—yet not for scholars.

Conclusion

Tanasković has an impressive career, with years of practical experiences as a diplomat, as well as years of scholarly pursuits behind him. His knowledge of the subject definitely exceeds my own. And yet, be that as it may, it does not change the fact that *Pusto tursko* is not a scientific monograph. As shown in this review, the book's methodology is flawed, and its approach to Turkey is grounded in Orientalism. The book represents a collection of essays on several topics, not a well-researched scientific monograph on a particular subject. The only reason it is being treated as such is the author's career as a former diplomat and, currently, as a famous and influential Oriental scholar in Serbia. Tanasković's work therefore automatically gains prominence. However, while an impressive career might be sufficient for adding weight to arguments when writing for a wider audience, it is not in academia, which recognizes this practice as an example of an argument from authority. The fact that someone has or had an impressive career does not mean that whatever they write on the subject is automatically true. There is no place for an argument from authority in science nor in political science; no amount of experience can turn an essay into a research paper. No amount of experience can turn *Pusto tursko* from a collection of essays into a scientific monograph, which it is currently being presented as to its readers.

That being said, *Pusto tursko* is a quality work, but of a different nature. The essays

[8] Tanasković (2020), p. 90.

[9] Tanasković (2020), p. 173.

Tanasković presents in the book offer a lot of insight. Each one of them gives the reader a unique glimpse into the current state of affairs in Turkey. They accomplish this precisely because of the author's background: they are so informative because Tanasković is a leading expert who also has firsthand experience due to his former role as ambassador to Turkey. They are valuable, but readers need to know that what they are reading is not an objective scientific analysis. Rather, the work represents a collection of well-written and thought through essays, and there is a big difference. Good as they might be, essays represent one way of looking at things—one among so many others. As such, the book should be treated as a source of insights by a prominent scholar and diplomat, not as a scientifically researched work on "an easily provable fact." There are plenty of prominent scholars who disagree with Tanasković when it comes to the existence of neo-Ottomanism, but he leaves no room for their arguments in his writings. He simply acknowledges that they exist, and implies that they are all wrong,[10] choosing to focus primarily on the work of Ahmet Davutoğlu and to ignore substantial literature on the subject—literature which refutes him.

As a result, even though it is valuable, *Pusto tursko* offers just one way of looking at a complex phenomenon, not an objective truth about Turkey's use of neo-Ottomanism in its foreign policy as it is being promoted in Serbia. One should approach the book as one side of an ongoing debate, not as a work on "an easily provable fact" that is undisputedly true simply because the author is an expert. Hopefully, as any scholar ought to do, the author himself will acknowledge this and start engaging in this debate rather than promoting his view as the right one in his home country. It remains to be seen whether this will be the case.

[10] Tanasković (2020), p. 70.

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