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Possibilities for Epistemic Violence in Asylum Process: Lessons From the Case of Finland

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ABSTRACT

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In 2015, Europe noticed that the Common European Asylum System malfunctions in “crises”-like-situations. With the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, the European Union (EU) tries to ensure an efficient and humane migration management. Migration being a highly polarising issue, fuelled by populist rhetoric, migration policies must be founded on scientifically discovered implications of the policies. Here, we evaluate the Finnish asylum process through analysing the legislation, legal practice and 70 former asylum seekers’ experiences. We merge these viewpoints through the concept of epistemic violence understood as failures in linguistic exchanges harming the speaker. We examine whether the legal amendments in Finland, increased the possibilities for epistemic violence in the asylum process. At worst, epistemic violence results wrongly motivated decisions in asylum cases. Based on the case of Finland, this paper argues that more research is needed in times of efficiency pressure regarding asylum processes and overall contestation related to the legitimacy of the EU migration policies.

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Introduction

Nothing outside Europe suggests a decrease in migration. There is turmoil in the Middle East and some African and South Asian countries. Climate change and the existing structured migration routes foster future migration. Moreover, the growing global middle class will increase migration further. Larger population empowered economically coupled with remaining local inequalities, discontent and unrest are prone to materialise as forced migration. Meanwhile, the European Union (EU) aims to move towards a more harmonised, centralised and responsibly and fairly managed policy (European Commission, 2019) with the new pact on migration and asylum (European Commission, 2020). However, migration is a highly polarising issue where different interests pull into opposing directions, fuelled by populist rhetoric. There is a great contestation towards the EU migration policies, both for failing to reduce the number of migrants coming but also for disregarding human rights and the rule of law (Gadd, Engström & Grabowska-Moroz, 2020). Political sensitivity and disagreement over the nature and scope of solidarity in the EU’s common policy on asylum, immigration and external border control undermines the EU’s ability to implement an effective policy in this area. The EU was in “crisis” as irregular migrants outnumbered the reception capacity of some member states in 2015 and 2016. Moreover, an overall willingness to help refugees in need swiftly turned into an increasing pressure to “regain control” of the situation (Brekke and Staver, 2018), which is also happening in Finland.

In 2015, nearly 33,000 people applied for asylum status in Finland (Migri, 2018). Finnish authorities were not legally well prepared for this eightfold increase in the number of individuals coming¹, and thus, Finnish immigration law and legal practice were amended in 2016. In 2015, if the conditions for asylum or subsidiary protection were not fulfilled, but the applicant was unable to return to his/her home country due to a poor security situation or an environmental disaster, residence permits could be obtained based on humanitarian protection (Aer, 2016). In 2016, the conditions for obtaining asylum and other residence permits in Finland were tightened and this possibility was removed from the Finnish law. Furthermore, in 2016 some restrictions on legal assistance in the asylum process were introduced. The legal assistance by private lawyers in the asylum process in Finnish Immigration Service (Migri) was, *in practice* no longer possible unless the presence of the assistant was necessary for highly severe reasons. Such reasons could be particularly weak mental or health situation or if the asylum seeker is under 18 years old and in the country without a guardian (Changes on Aliens Act 9§ and the Legal Aid Act). Yet, depression, anxiety or trauma are not enough to fulfil this condition.

Despite the stressful situation, an asylum seeker must be able to tell a personal, coherent, well-founded, credible and detailed story including all relevant details. S/he needs to remember, e.g. the time and the place of different life events, places of residence and be able to tell why specifically him/her is persecuted by the specific actor. Often to be able to prove who is behind the threatening is highly challenging. Hence, not only does the asylum seeker need to be able to tell the story in detail, s/he needs to understand what is relevant, so actually understand the Finnish asylum process. This is challenging also from the cultural viewpoint of storytelling. The things, which are considered vital in the Finnish context and in relation to the requirements of international protection, might be different from what the asylum seeker considers as vital. Moreover, s/he needs to acknowledge how the interpreter puts the words, detects the possible shortcomings in the translation and insist on correcting them. However, as the translation is to a language asylum seeker does not often know, assuring the correct translation is extremely difficult. Furthermore, knowing how the interviewer understood, and interpreted the translated story, is highly challenging. For some asylum seekers trusting fully in authorities is counterintuitive and even impossible. Besides, some asylum seekers might suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder jeopardising the possibilities for coherent storytelling (Gadd & Lehtikunnas, 2019). Nevertheless, according to a Directive on victims' rights (2012/29/EU, Article 3) established by the European Council, the member states need to ensure that communications between the authorities and, in this case, asylum seekers acknowledge personal characteristics of the victim including any disability, which may affect the ability to understand the communication or to be understood. Additionally, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has given instructions on examining asylum seekers' claims concerning epistemic difficulties. The procedural instructions of UNHCR have addressed the need for the assistance of independent experts with particularised knowledge of the country, region and context of the claim, capable of objective interpretation and evaluation (HCR/GIP/04/06) particularly.

In this article, we assess the Finnish legislation and legal practice regarding the asylum process, yet emphasising the asylum interview, as it is essential for the result of the process. On the one hand, we do the assessment by analysing legal documents. On the other hand, we discover 70 asylum seekers' own experiences of their asylum interviews in Finland. These both viewpoints are jostled through the concept of epistemic violence, understood here as described by Hornsby (1995) and Dotson (2011); meaning a failure in linguistic exchanges. The word 'epistemic' suggests that interpretations in linguistic exchanges are framed as knowledge and 'violence' denotes that this 'knowledge' has potentially a negative impact on the *other* (Teo, 2010). Thus, the violence might be indirect and non-physical (Teo, 2010), yet it can potentially have very material consequences such as a negative decision on an asylum request. We do not claim that epistemic violence would only occur in linguistic exchanges. For instance, Foucauldian and post-colonial literatures suggest epistemic violence as suppression, dismissal and destruction of knowledge systems often replaced with powerful knowledge of the elite. Yet touching upon the issue of knowledge, we focus specifically on linguistic exchanges as asylum interview is largely about linguistic exchange and communication.

Through this research, we answer three separate yet interconnected research questions. First, what are the aspects in the Finnish asylum process causing risk for epistemic violence (if any) and are the amendments in the Finnish law creating more possibilities for epistemic violence in Finnish asylum processes? Second, what

¹ The normal annual amount of new asylum seekers in Finland varies from 3000 to 4000 (Migri, 2018)

kinds of experiences do the participants of this research have from their asylum interviews? Thirdly, what can be learned from the asylum seekers' experiences when considering migration policies even at the European level?

Data and methods

The data consists of official documents of international law and the Finnish Constitution. Moreover, we have interview notes with 70 former asylum seekers living in Finland (24 females and 46 males). We conducted the interviews individually or in small groups depending on the preference of the research participants. The migrants were not pre-selected. Some gatekeepers facilitated initial communication with irregular migrants, for instance, by informing them about our research. Interpreters from the same background were present in the conversations if necessary; otherwise, we used either Finnish or English. We avoided any predeterminations regarding anything in the lives of the participants, in this way appreciating the knowledge systems of the participants. All participants had experiences from at least one asylum interview. Furthermore, all participants had received negative decisions on their asylum requests but felt that they could not return to their respective home countries. All the interviews were conducted during the years 2018 and 2019. This particular study is part of a larger research, and thus, many different topics were discussed in the interviews. The legal documents were analysed using theory-oriented content analysis in order to detect possibilities for epistemic violence in the asylum process and especially in the asylum interviews. We distinguished elements, which, according to our conceptualisations are prone to increase possibilities for epistemic violence. Such elements were for instance, but not limited to, mistakes in understanding or in being understood, the power imbalance in the interview, negating and nullifying the statements of asylum seekers. The interviews were analysed in this same way using theory-oriented content analysis focusing on epistemic violence.

Research ethics were negotiated constantly during the fieldwork and the writing process according to the guideline of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK). The topic of migration is highly inflammable in Finland and consequently, we carried out the writing so that the results of the research would not cause any negative impact on anyone. Thus, we have decided to withdraw from indicating the nationality of the participants' quotations. By this decision, we want to avoid the situation where all people with a certain nationality would be labelled by something only one individual has stated. This is also in line with the norms introduced by the new reform of EU data protection (European Commission 2018). Moreover, we only use selective examples from the interviews. In case we would offer comprehensive descriptions of the situations and views of participants, we might hamper the unrecognizability of the participants.

Epistemic violence

Epistemic violence arises in situations where *other* is created and/or the hearer is incapable of comprehending the speaker in linguistic exchanges causing harm to the speaker (see also Spivak, 1988; Dotson, 2011). According to our conceptualisation, the word 'epistemic' suggests that interpretations in linguistic exchanges are framed as knowledge and 'violence' denotes that this 'knowledge' has potentially a negative impact on the *other* (Teo, 2010).

Epistemic violence may occur intentionally or unintentionally (Dotson, 2011). Hampering other persons (or group's) possibility to speak, express him/herself and be heard may be even unconscious, indirect and non-physical and consequently challenging to detect and address. Nevertheless, this hampering might potentially have very severe material consequences (Teo, 2010).

In empirical sciences, epistemic violence has been discussed in relation to analysing and interpreting data. Often scientists analyse the data and refer to it as a fact. An analysis of the rhetoric of facts in academic discourses reveals that often what is presented as a 'fact' actually is data and interpretative speculation of it (Teo, 2008). This relates epistemic violence to the hermeneutic processes of interpretation of data (Teo, 2010). Speaker's vulnerabilities always exist in these linguistic exchanges and what happens to the speaker is depending on how his/her words are heard and interpreted (Dotson, 2011). These communications might be interpreted in a certain way even though an equally valid alternative interpretation would be possible (Teo, 2008). Thus, it is relevant to declare from which theoretical viewpoint the data has been interpreted, making

it open for alternative interpretations. Nevertheless, according to research ethics, scientific writing should never harm anyone, i.e. refrain from epistemic violence.

Increased possibility for epistemic violence is created in linguistic exchanges when there is a dependence relationship between the speakers and the hearer. One excellent example is an asylum interview. In a dependence relationship, the situation of the speaker depends, in one way or another, on whether the hearer understands the speaker's words and understands what the speaker means with those words. Therefore, the communication is about the speaker being able not only to express meaningful thoughts but also to be heard leaving the communication ultimately depending on the hearer (Hornsby, 1995).

Refusal or inability of the hearer to communicatively reciprocate a linguistic exchange and thus, understand the message of the speaker can stem from the lack of knowledge, creating possibilities for epistemic violence (Bergin, 2002; Townley, 2006). In such a case, the lack of knowledge is not necessarily related to intelligence but can be caused by inadequate hermeneutical resources and epistemic differences referring to a gap between different worldviews (Berenstain, 2016). That gap, in turn, might be prompted by different social, cultural or economic situations or sexual orientation, gender or religion creating different understandings of the world (Bergin, 2002). Epistemic violence is widely explored in feminist studies also highlighting the often-vulnerable position of women in relation to men (Ayoette and Husain, 2005).

One form of epistemic violence is micro-invalidating, e.g. exclusion, negation and nullifying the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person (Sue et al., 2007). In such communication, the speaker is not recognised as the knower of certain information, but his/her views and opinions are actively negated. This might happen when the testimony or a statement of a person is in contradiction with commonly accepted "truths".

Legal rights of asylum seekers and asylum process in Finland

According to article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) everyone has the right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution in another country. Moreover, according to UDHR and the European Convention on Human rights (ECHR) everyone has the right to a fair and public hearing within a reasonable time in an independent and impartial lawfully established tribunal when deciding on his/her rights and obligations. The European Council has affirmed that access to justice, legal security and efficient asylum procedures need to be guaranteed to everybody, regardless of the member state the asylum seeker applies for asylum in (EC 2010/C 115/01). According to the directive on common asylum procedures (2013/32/EU), the requirements for the processes (e.g. effective access to these processes, legal assistance, and understandable communication) need to be ensured already at the first instances of the process. Additionally, asylum seekers have the right to have competent personnel dealing with their asylum cases having appropriate knowledge and obtaining necessary training in the field of international protection (L 180/61). The EU directive on victim's rights (2012/29/EU, Article 3) gives an obligation to the member states to ensure simple and accessible linguistic or written exchange in proceedings where information about the process and asylum seekers' rights and obligations is provided by an authority. Furthermore, the member states need to ensure that such communication takes into account the victim's personal characteristics including any disability affecting the ability to understand or to be understood. According to the directive, the victim also has the right to be accompanied by an assistant *if needed* to be able to understand or to be understood. International law also includes the non-refoulement clause, according to which no one can be returned to an area where s/he may become subject to the death penalty, torture, persecution or any other detriment of human dignity (UDHR art. 14(1)). However, for the asylum seeker, the member state examining the application is still significant. The outcome of the individual asylum application may differ greatly depending on the member state processing the application.

According to the Finnish Alien Act 94§, asylum applications, including the grounds for international protection, are processed at the border or within the territory of Finland. Finnish Constitution (731/1999) secures the publicity of the hearing, the right to be heard, and the right to get a reasoned decision and to appeal, as well as the other guarantees of fair trial and good administration. According to the Alien Act 97§, Migri is obliged to determine the identity of a person seeking international protection and his/her route to Finland and determine whether an asylum seeker's application can be processed in Finland. This is done in the asylum interview, for which the EU directive on common procedures for international protection sets the

minimum standards. After registering into the system as an asylum seeker, begins the asylum investigation including two sessions of interviews: one investigating person's identity, itinerary and entry to the country, another clarifying the motives for being granted asylum. The grounds for persecution, violations and threats in the home country are interrogated at this point. Before the interview, the applicant receives instructions on the interview procedure, obligations and rights related to the interview. The instructions given by the Migri highlight also that applicant him/herself needs to disclose *orally* the grounds for his/her persecution and other violations s/he has confronted or the threat of them in the home country giving the interview a central significance in the asylum processes.

According to the Aliens Act 9§, an alien whose case is dealt with within the Finnish courts is granted legal aid (or when legal aid is of particular cause). Legal aid is provided by state funds to a person in need of professional assistance and who, due to his financial position, is unable to cover the expenditures himself (257/2002). Legal aid includes legal advice, the necessary measures, assistance in the court and in communication with other authorities, and exemption from some of the administrative costs involved. Legal aid of asylum seekers under 18 years of age entering Finland alone is always compensated.

In the asylum interview

In the interview, an asylum seeker is given an opportunity to talk about his/her own country or the country of residence and about the experienced threat there. The aim is to discover the violations of rights in the person's past. On the other hand, the possible violations and threats in the future are also of particular interest (Aer, 2016). The purpose is that all elements related to the acquisition of the applicants' residence permit would be clarified already at this stage (2013/32/EU). The individual conditions for international protection as well as the country-specific information on asylum seeker's home country are acknowledged in the decision-making process (Finnish Aliens Act 97§).

Migri is responsible for arranging an interpreter for the interview. At the beginning of the asylum interview, the interviewer is supposed to ask whether the asylum seeker understands the interpreter or not. However, professional interpreters have not always been available due to the pressure in the legal system after 2015. Nevertheless, according to Article 15(3) of the EU procedures directive (EU Procedures Directive Article 15(3)), the member states must ensure that the interviews are conducted under conditions allowing asylum seekers to present the grounds for their applications in a comprehensive manner. Article 15 also addresses the procedural requirements for interviews by giving special importance to the interviewer's competence to acknowledge personal and general circumstances related to the asylum application, such as the asylum seeker's cultural origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or vulnerability. Migri instructs the interviewer to assess also what parts of the asylum seeker's story and documents are important for the case. If necessary, the interviewer asks further questions to guide asylum seekers to reveal the most important things. Consequently, successful communication between the different parties in the interview (i.e. asylum seeker, interpreter and the interviewer) is crucial for the result of the asylum request.

According to the Finnish Administrative Proceedings Act (new Act replaced the old Administrative Act 1.1.2020) and Alien Act, the authorities are obliged to investigate and reveal all the important aspects for individual asylum cases. Moreover, the authority must take its own initiative and determine all the relevant aspects of the process. Furthermore, the asylum seeker must be given the opportunity to present his/her views on the documents relevant to the case. The applicant has the burden of proof of the grounds for the application to be believable. Supposedly, the asylum seeker is obliged to disclose *all* the elements s/he considers relevant for the process, and which give grounds for the application and endorse the story with official documents and other elements confirming the information (Aer, 2016).

Deciding whether to grant asylum

If the application is unbelievable, it will be dismissed (Aer, 2016). This situation is challenging as, at worst, there is a word of the asylum seeker against one of the decision-makers. According to the benefit of the doubt rule, however, in this case, the advantage should be on the asylum seeker's side. Nonetheless, in Finland, two opposing statements often decrease the evidential value of the asylum seeker. This power-laden moment is crucial in determining whether the asylum seeker will get his rights fulfilled or not.

The asylum decision is made based on the information received, especially from the interview and on the other material, the asylum seeker submits. When Migri makes the decision on an asylum application, they assess whether the story told in the interview and the documents presented are credible. Assessing the need for international protection, in addition to the persecution experienced in the past, the decision-maker assesses whether the asylum seeker would be in danger of being persecuted if s/he returned to the country of origin. Such assessment is extremely difficult. In Finnish legal practice, it is not sufficient for the grounds for international protection that an asylum seeker has previously experienced persecution or serious threat (Aer, 2016). However, in international refugee law, the experienced persecution or danger has consistently been considered as a strong indication of continuing threat (Qualification directive, 2011/95/EU, Art. 4). According to the Qualification directive, the evaluator of the asylum application needs to demonstrate a fundamental change in the situation and circumstances that will eliminate the risk of serious harm in the future if the presupposition of the danger is not found valid. However, according to the directive, the asylum seeker must be able to demonstrate a real risk, while the decision-maker must be able to demonstrate the essential and fundamental change of the circumstances (UNHCR, 2011).

In Finland, if an asylum seeker does not fulfil the requirements of the Aliens Act to obtain asylum and s/he is not considered persecuted for the reasons presented favouring the asylum, s/he may be granted a residence permit based on subsidiary protection (Finnish Aliens Act, 88§). In this case, it is required that significant grounds have been presented to believe that if s/he is returned to his/her country of origin, s/he would be in real danger of suffering serious harm and because of such a risk, the person is either incapable or reluctant to resort to the protection of the country. Serious harm, in this case, is for example, death penalty, execution, torture or otherwise inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, or serious and personal danger caused by arbitrary violence in situations of international or internal armed conflicts (Finnish Aliens Act, 88§). The subsidiary protection requires that the country of origin or an international organisation do not offer the person effective and permanent protection.

Amendments to the immigration policies and legislation in Finland 2016

In Finland, the broadest amendment on immigration legislation was made urgently in 2016, yet some of the amendments occurred already before autumn 2015. The purpose of the amendment was primarily to enhance the efficiency of courts and to provide access to legal aid when dealing with issues of international protection while simultaneously reducing the cost of government finances (HE 32/2016). According to the amended law, the legal aid in the asylum interview is *in practice* impossible as the legal aid no longer includes the presence of a private lawyer in an asylum interview (previously in Finland private lawyers have taken care of the asylum cases to a great extent,). Nonetheless, asylum seekers still have the right to legal aid if the presence of an assistant is necessary for particularly weighty reasons or if the asylum seeker is under 18 years old and in the country without a guardian (Changes on Aliens Act 9§ and the Legal Aid Act). The legal councillor is allowed to be present during the interview, but after tightening regulations, the councillor will only be paid if there are special, weighty reasons for his/her presence. The legal aid office decides whether it will compensate the legal councillor's costs.

Additionally, in 2016, the times to appeal were amended. The appeal time is one of the most concrete and important formal regulations regarding asylum seekers' processes. The appeal period for Administrative Court was shortened from 30 days to 21 days and to the Supreme Administrative Court from 30 days to 14 days from the date of notification of the decision (12.8.2016/646). In relation to the appealing deadlines, the experts raised their concerns in the preparatory phase of the amendment by addressing those deadlines should not be set at any specific time, or at least they should be longer (HE 218/2014). These deadlines are rather short, especially for asylum seekers who might have a limited understanding of the Finnish legal system. Nevertheless, together with these two amendments, i.e. cut in legal aid provision and shortened appealing times, meant significant changes to asylum processes.

Possibilities for epistemic violence in the asylum process in Finland

Epistemic violence occurs for instance, when misunderstandings (intentional or unintentional) arise in linguistic communication causing a negative impact on the other. There are multiple possibilities for epistemic violence throughout the asylum process in Finland. Furthermore, the possibilities for epistemic violence increased after the amendments in the legislation in 2016. The possibilities for epistemic violence

ultimately come to the questions of the (in)ability to speak and be understood, lack of knowledge and nullifying the knowledge of *the other*.

Policymakers, also in Finland, have created a narrative of being hard on migration (Tyler, 2013; Sager, 2018), which, in its own right, has been prone to increase the depiction of the *other*. This creation of *other*, according to Spivak (1988), is one form of epistemic violence. This issue of othering is important. As the topic of migration is so polarised, there is a section of the public claiming that the majority of asylum seekers are “fortune seekers” and “bogus refugees” (Verkuyten, Mepham and Kros, 2018). Pirjatanniemi et al. (2021) also assessed recently the joint implications of the amendments in the Alien act and its application procedures in Finland. They demonstrated that the impacts of the discourses regarding migration, produced during the drafting of the laws, do not necessarily remain merely in that process. Government proposals are also sources of law informing about the aims of legislators for instance (Pirjatanniemi et al. 2021). Argumentation in the government proposals can, in the hands of the authorities, become judicial arguments (Pirjatanniemi et al., 2021, p.47). Their study gave grounds to believe that the language in the government proposals might have had an impact on the authorities applying the law when they use their discretion in determining whether to believe the story of an asylum seeker and whether or not to consider her fear to be justified (Pirjatanniemi et al., 2021). Partly due to this narrative of harder immigration policy, the policies and practices in Migri were amended. The proportioned number of negative decisions increased remarkably in 2017 compared with the year 2015. In 2015, Migri considered the asylum seekers’ fear objectively justified in the simple majority of the cases whereas in 2017, every fifth case was successful based on these same elements (Saarikkomäki et al., 2018). The argument in which the asylum seeker’s story was considered *clearly unconvincing* occurred in approximately every third decision. The increase cannot be explained by the change in asylum seekers’ profile, but the objectivity of the story evaluated by Migri was more difficult to reach in 2017 than in 2015 (Saarikkomäki et al., 2018). By evaluating asylum decisions and what the asylum seekers feared Saarikkomäki et al., (2018) revealed significant changes in how Migri considered whether the fear was objectively justified or not. The same team concluded, moreover, that in 2015 the threshold to give negative decision because of the lack of credibility was quite high whereas in 2017 the threshold was considerably lower. Consequently, in 2017 and onwards, the asylum seekers have been required to provide more detailed evidence of their fears. They are required to be more accurate and detailed in linguistic exchanges during their processes. Moreover, this change in the legal practice increased the nullifying the individual as the knower of his/her situation indicating that the (possibilities for) epistemic violence increased with the amendments.

The asylum process narrows the possibility of asylum seekers to speak and be heard by the rule of having only two interviews where important and relevant aspects for the case need to be revealed. This makes the process prone to epistemic violence. Especially the importance of the asylum interview creates agony and stress through vulnerability and threat of failure resulting deportation. Under 57§ of the Administrative Proceeding’s Act, when an individual requests an extra oral hearing, s/he must state the reasons why the extra interview is necessary and what explanation s/he would give in the interview. Arranging an extra interview is highly exceptional in Finland and thus, success in the interview has an essential role in the asylum process putting extra pressure on the applicant.

In the asylum interview, the asylum seeker is totally depending on the understanding of the interviewer. The dependence is one characteristic of epistemic violence (e.g., Dotson, 2011). Therefore, an unsuccessful communication might have very severe negative consequences (Teo, 2010) for the asylum seeker in the form of a negative decision on the application. The future of the asylum seeker is in the hands of the listeners: interpreter and interviewer. This dependence relation of the asylum seeker on the interviewer’s (and the interpreter’s) ability to hear and understand is evident in asylum processes and increases the possibility of epistemic violence.

Reciprocity is essential in successful communication. It is not only related to understanding the *speaker’s words* but also to *hearing the words as they are meant to be heard* (Hornsby, 1995). There are possibilities for lack of understanding in the asylum process and especially in the asylum interview due to knowledge deficit, which could cause the realisation of epistemic violence in this power-laden communication (Bergin, 2002). The lack of knowledge might be due to the different worldviews of the asylum seeker and the interviewer for instance. It is inevitable that the backgrounds of the asylum seekers and the interviewers might be drastically different. It is highly difficult to avoid the effect of different worldviews in any way, but

often these personal traits are contrasted with courts' efficiency requirements and productivity targets of the judgments (Korhonen, 2017). The interpreters have, moreover, a crucial role in communication during the asylum interview. As the asylum seekers' cases are often related to cultural, traditional, and religious aspects, the interviewer and interpreter might have their own opinions about the statements of the asylum seeker. Nevertheless, they ought to consider the case objectively without judging or interpreting the statements based on their own experiences or general assumptions (Gadd & Lehtikunnas, 2019). Certainly, professional interpreters are trained to avoid their own opinions in translation work, but in the Finnish case, there have not been enough professional interpreters available in these interviews. If the interpreter has the same cultural or religious background as the asylum seeker, the asylum seeker may be afraid of being interfered with or judged by the interpreter and this might hamper the free communication in the interview. Then again, without having this understanding of the background, it is challenging to be able to hear the full story and to understand it clearly (Gadd & Lehtikunnas, 2019). These aspects create a real danger of intentional as well as unintentional epistemic violence, and the possibility to hinder open communication. Even little misunderstandings and differences in the terminology used can create an irrevocable impact on the coherency and credibility of the asylum seekers' stories (Gadd & Lehtikunnas, 2019).

The burden of the proof on the asylum seeker imposes high obligations and expectations on the applicant's ability to communicate and reveal all the relevant elements for the application. It could be argued that individual asylum seekers could not possibly know what the relevant facts for the case are and thus, question whether s/he has a real possibility to direct and govern his/her own case. This lack of knowledge is a prerequisite for epistemic violence as the rights of the asylum seekers are depending on knowing those relevant factors.

Particularly, it is important to take into account how previous experiences and trauma affect the ability to communicate, remember things and above all to express these things in a consistent and open manner. If a person is suffering (but is not diagnosed) from post-traumatic stress disorder, the person might be unable to make a coherent narrative (Brewin, Dalgleish and Joshep, 1996), which is required for a positive asylum decision. Under extreme stress, which might be the case with asylum seekers, the hippocampus works less efficiently, and attention is narrowed, hampering the coherency of telling (Brewin, Dalgleish and Joshep, 1996). Elements, such as challenging and traumatic experiences, are likely to have significant impacts on the safety situation in the country of origin regardless of whether the individual is able to tell them in the right way during the process or not which creates a true risk for epistemic violence.

The information given in the asylum interview is mirrored against the other evidence provided by the asylum seeker but also against so-called *country information*. This country information is an evaluation of a country stating, for instance, whether the country is dangerous or not and whether it is possible for people to escape dangerous events inside the country. This country information affects the possibility to get asylum in Finland. However, sometimes the story of an asylum seeker is in contradiction with the country information. According to the case law, the Courts have not been considered to be obliged to hear asylum seekers about the country information used in his/her particular case despite the specific information being evaluated together with the asylum seeker's own story (Aer, 2016). Then there is a possibility for an asylum seeker being disqualified as a knower and his/her personal experiences, fears and knowledge of the home country are nullified (see, e.g. Sue et al., 2007). The interpretation concerning a specific country becomes epistemic truth overriding individual experiences and embodied knowledge. This is a concrete example of possible epistemic violence in the asylum process especially in the case where the asylum seeker is simply incapable of telling the story in an adequately coherent and detailed way or in the case, the country information is partly insufficient.

The purpose of the amendments in the law in 2016 was to make the processes shorter. However, shortening of the appeal period inevitably increased the possibility of epistemic violence encountered by asylum seekers as the appealing needs to be done in a shorter time hampering the thorough work and possibilities to provide asylum seekers with a full understanding of the asylum process. To respond to the asylum decisions, often requires longer so that the situation can be properly scrutinised with a lawyer. These time constraints also cause unnecessary pressure on lawyers assisting asylum processes, as it is often more time-consuming to contact these clients, arrange an interpreter, notify the decision and clarify the contents of it, but also to understand the possible errors that occurred in the previous stage(s) of the process. This compromises the quality of the Finnish legal system.

Consequently, there are occasionally smaller and bigger errors left in the documents from the interviews, which are difficult to retrieve afterwards. Sometimes, there is a lack of both capability and desire to hear and understand the stories presented and the documents from the interviews do not include everything the asylum seeker said or the documents are written using slightly different expressions making the story incoherent. These are often noticed only after receiving the negative decision on the asylum request. Dotson (2011) underlined the necessity of understanding the meaning of the words in linguistic exchanges to avoid epistemic violence. However, this precise understanding is sometimes lacking in the translation and writing process of the documents from the asylum interview particularly when there is not enough time for the lawyer and the asylum seekers to go through the process thoroughly.

One case concerning directly Finnish practices and the credibility was a case of a Zairean man (KHO, 2003:8). The Finnish Supreme Administrative Court rejected his application for international protection. The European Court of Human Rights declared the story of the applicant as credible and considered the applicant to be in great danger if he was returned to his home country (ECtHR, N. v. *Finland*). In this case, one can ask, whether the man was not fully able to provide all the needed elements for his case and the Finnish authorities did not investigate properly or did the man suffer epistemic violence causing a misunderstanding between the interviewer and him.

Experiences of asylum interviews in Finland

Asylum seekers' dependence on the interviewer is evident in the asylum interview and according to the participants of this research, that dependence caused them to torment before and during the interview. Will the interviewer help me to make my story as strong as possible? Does the interviewer intend to ask the right questions benefiting me? Furthermore, does the interviewer understand me? (i.e. have hermeneutical resources to understand or does the story remain unintelligible. See e.g. Berenstein, 2016). Forty-two of our seventy participants had experiences, which fulfil the characteristics of epistemic violence.

Twelve participants of this study explicitly said that they were not satisfied with the interpreter's translation. They told to have corrected various expressions in the documents from the interview, trying to find suitable expressions. This is an important point as translation is always about shrinking a language (the asylum seeker's story in this case) into a form suitable for the prevailing system and mindset (Vásquez, 2011). Stories become easily less nuanced than reality. However, in some worst cases actual flaws remained in the documents. The interviewer was unable to understand the details of the story and the asylum seeker was unable to detect the failures in understanding. Failures were detected only when the asylum seeker got a rejection of his/her asylum request based on the mistakes in the documents causing the misunderstanding. One of the participants described this: "*Only when I got the first negative decision and read through the papers with my Finnish friend did I realise that no, this wasn't what I meant*". This highlights the difficulty of perceiving epistemic violence before it is actually materialised as a negative decision (Fricker, 2007).

The failures in the linguistic exchange in the interview are extremely difficult to correct afterwards. Changing the wording or expression often leads to a situation where the credibility of the story is decreased (Koistinen and Jauhainen, 2017) as one of the participants explained:

"I made the corrections and appealed. I got a second negative decision fast as they said that my story wasn't coherent anymore". Another participant continued: "In my papers there is a line saying that I cannot be granted asylum as I have not been threatened in my home country in 2014 or 2015. I tried to correct this by saying that of course not, because I had already escaped and I was already in a refugee camp. I showed a document from UNHCR. Still negative."

In these cases, it is evident that the testimonies of these individuals have not been heard and there have been severe difficulties in understanding. Nevertheless, Article 16 of the EU procedure directive guarantees the right to the opportunity to give an explanation regarding elements, which may be missing and/or any inconsistencies or contradictions in the asylum seeker's story. Sometimes misunderstandings are merely minor differences in the words used, sometimes the word has a totally different meaning in different tribes and families changing the content of the story creating a dearth in the coherency and credibility of the story. One participant explained a confusion, which happened in his asylum interview:

“I used the word ‘bro’ of my friend but the interpreter had translated it as ‘brother’. My story wasn’t coherent as they have my other documents stating that I don’t have any brothers. But I never said I had, I talked about my friend”.

This episode highlights the importance of the quality of the interpreter and his/her suitability to each particular case. This is also highly relevant in terms of legal protection. However, five participants told to have been afraid of being interfered with or judged by the interpreter as the interpreter might have a different perception of the situation back home. One participant described this: *“I noticed that the interpreter was from a different sect than me. I did not feel free to talk as I know that he doesn’t believe in what I say”*. Besides these challenges, ten participants mentioned that they used Google Translator in their asylum interview. Time pressure to give a decision on asylum applications only made it more challenging to find professional interpreters for the hearings. These aspects create a real danger of intentional as well as unintentional epistemic violence and the possibility to hinder open communication.

Most of the participants felt disqualified as knowers about their own situation. They had heard rumours about the country information before their interview and felt nullified already in advance as one of the participants explained: *“I thought already before the interview that they [Migri] wouldn’t believe me anyway and would say that I can go to...[other part of the home country]”*.

In the negative decisions, it is often claimed that the applicant has been asked to tell everything relevant and there are no legal grounds to give asylum. Nearly all the participants (65/70) questioned how they would know what is relevant. This problem grew after the amendments in the immigration law in Finland (yet it existed already before) as legal advice might nowadays be scarce. The lack of advice and knowledge increases the possibility for epistemic violence in the asylum process as it jeopardises the ability of asylum seekers to speak. One participant said: *“The person who assisted me in the interview [a voluntary person, not a lawyer] told me to tell them how difficult I had it and what I was afraid of and I did. However, I didn’t know what I should have told until I got help from a lawyer. Then I had already gotten a negative”*. Participants of this research said that they had not understood the extent and level of the details that should be said and explained during the process. This highlights the problem of not knowing the relevant aspects for the case, causing the epistemic violence due to the lack of knowledge (Bergin, 2002; Townley, 2006).

In Finland, it is possible to make an asylum application for the whole family together. In such a case, the interview is for both the husband and the wife. This might limit the possibilities of both partners to talk freely. In our research, two women talked about their experiences to anybody in Finland only after their families had received a negative decision on their asylum applications. Later they asked whether the social worker could organise a possibility for them to talk about their own stories and not the story of the family. One participant put it like this:

“I would like to tell about my situation. My husband is threatened in our home country, but it wasn’t enough to get asylum here. Above all that, my parents do not accept my husband and they have said they will kill me if they get me. I cannot go back”.

This example illustrates the possibility of epistemic violence encountered by women as their possibilities to talk might be even more limited (at least in these cases of family applications) than the one of men. This limited ability ends up having a negative impact on women (Dotson, 2011; Teo, 2010). However, the issue of overlapping inequalities is not an issue merely regarding women. This is highly relevant also for LGBTQ communities and requires further exploration.

Along with the aforementioned factors jeopardising the ability to talk and the dependence relationship asylum seekers have on the interviewers, attention needs to be paid to the impact of personal traumas, habits and experiences of asylum seekers. As mentioned, when a person is traumatised, telling a coherent story might be impossible (See Brewin, Dalgleish and Joshep, 1996). Asylum seekers do not always get a thorough medical check-up, and even less often, for example post-traumatic stress disorder is diagnosed. Nevertheless, in order to get asylum, the story needs to be coherent and detailed. This is however, challenging as one participant said: *“I did not have my mind with me. I just could not concentrate and kept forgetting what I was supposed to say. I guess I didn’t do too well as I got negative”*. Moreover, the issue of trust is evident in the asylum interview. The person might have lived the whole life learning not to trust authorities and for

them, trusting the interviewer and the interpreter might be counterintuitive. One of the participants explained this:

“In my home country I needed to fear militia. So, I learned very young to talk without telling much. I learned that I couldn’t trust. When I arrived, I should have told everything directly but I was too afraid to do so. I got negative [decision]. I noticed I need to trust and tell everything and I appealed. They said my story is not coherent anymore and that I should have told everything directly”.

These quotes are clear examples of the challenges giving room for epistemic violence in power laden linguistic exchanges. However, it is important to acknowledge that not all epistemic violence is intentional or in the case of this research, practised actively by the authorities, interpreters or even the asylum system. Nevertheless, possibilities for experienced epistemic violence might be, as shown, present despite any goodwill of the listener especially when the abilities to speak, understand and be understood are drastically jeopardised.

Concluding remarks

In this article, we analysed the asylum process in Finland to distinguish the aspects in the process causing risk for epistemic violence (if any) and if the amendments to the Finnish law and legal practice created more possibilities for epistemic violence in the Finnish asylum processes. Here we want, moreover, to conclude some lessons to be learned from the Finnish case.

There are multiple possibilities for epistemic violence throughout the Finnish asylum process. There are two occasions where asylum seekers need to disclose all relevant aspects for the case limiting the possibilities to talk and be heard outside those two occasions. Epistemic violence could occur when there is a failure in a linguistic exchange in a dependence relationship. The possibility for epistemic violence exists, as the asylum seeker is dependent on the interviewer’s (and the interpreter’s) ability to hear and understand the words of the asylum seeker.

The lack of knowledge of both, the asylum seeker, but possibly also the interpreter and interviewer upsurge the possibility for epistemic violence in the process as it risks the ability of asylum seekers to speak about the right aspects. As we showed, revealing grounds for protection and threat could be jeopardised by other elements too, e.g. fear of the asylum seeker to explain the things, lack of professional interpreters available in the interviews or disqualifying the knowledge of the asylum seeker about his/her home country. Moreover, we highlighted the difficulty of speaking after traumatic circumstances and embodying the idea of authorities being enemies. These aspects create a real danger of intentional as well as unintentional epistemic violence, and the possibility to hinder open communication.

Furthermore, the amendments in the legislation in 2016 increased the possibilities for epistemic violence or intensified the existing ones. From the viewpoint of this article, making the legal aid in the asylum interview *in practice* no longer possible (as the legal aid no longer includes the presence of a private lawyer in an asylum interview) is the biggest factor increasing possibilities for epistemic violence. The legal councillor is allowed to be present during the interview, but after tightening regulations, the councillor will only be paid if there are special, weighty reasons for his/her presence. Additionally, the amendment shortened the period for appealing to the Administrative Court and the Supreme Administrative Court to obtain international protection. This inevitably increased the possibility for epistemic violence as one needs to appeal in a shorter time, hampering the thorough work and possibilities to provide asylum seekers with a full understanding of the asylum process. Additionally, the time pressure to give the decision on asylum applications only made it more challenging to find professional interpreters for the hearings.

We found all these schoolbook aspects of epistemic violence in the experiences of the former asylum seekers. Forty-two of our seventy participants had experiences that fulfil the characteristics of epistemic violence. In some worst cases, there were actual flaws, which were not detected before the person received the negative decision. The interviewer was unable to understand the details of the story and the asylum seeker was unable to detect the failures in understanding. Through empirical examples, we showed the importance of the quality of the interpreter and his/her suitability to each particular case as even a slight changing of the

wording or expression might lead to a situation where the credibility of the story is decreased. Participants of this research said that they had not understood the extent and level of the details that should be said and explained during the process. Cutting the possibilities of legal advisor just made things more challenging. Nearly all the participants (65/70) questioned their possibilities to even know what is relevant to tell and sometimes felt nullified with their personal fears and knowledge about the country they came from.

These remarks are important in times of efficiency pressure regarding asylum processes and an overall contestation related to the rule of law and democracy in European migration policies. The new pact on migration and asylum aims at more efficient processes and gives legal guarantees of individual assessment of asylum claims and essential guarantees protecting access to asylum (European Commission, 2020). The possibilities for epistemic violence are difficult (if not impossible) to remove totally. Moreover, the possibilities for epistemic violence are tightly related to legal practice and political guidance, as we showed with the Finnish case. This makes the asylum system vulnerable to increased epistemic violence and in the worst case, violations of non-refoulement clause of the international law.

There are several points, which should be highlighted for possible migration management regulations in the EU. First of all, according to the directive on common asylum procedures, the requirements for asylum processes (e.g. effective access to these processes, legal assistance, and understandable communication) need to be ensured already at the first instances of the asylum processes. We stress that the emphasis ought to be in the beginning phase of the process. Epistemic violence, especially in the asylum interview, might prolong the processes as it increases pressure on the later legal stages through appeals and thus, make the process less effective from a process economic viewpoint. The possible mistakes and discrepancies in the first phase are likely to bring more work in the appealing phases, and these corrective measures are weaker in terms of legal security and certainty.

Secondly, the member states really have to fulfil their obligation to ensure simple and accessible linguistic or written exchange in proceedings in the asylum process. Here the competence of the interviewer (and interpreter) to acknowledge the personal and general circumstances related to the asylum application, such as the asylum seeker's cultural origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or vulnerability, are of vital importance. This does not happen, however, through Google Translator or without proper legal advice.

Lastly, we emphasise that even though everyone has the right to a fair and public hearing within a *reasonable time*, the decisions cannot be made within the too strict time frame if not enough qualified personnel are available to conduct the work. In order to (re)gain legitimacy in the eyes of the citizens in Europe and elsewhere, the EU needs to show the capacity to take responsibility and display trust and perception of fairness. Consequently, we need to be cautious with over-tightened time- and efficiency pressure for not to compensate the efficiency with poorer quality and increased epistemic violence.

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The Clash of Japan's FOIP and China's BRI?

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ABSTRACT

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Since the late 2010s, the concept of the “Indo-Pacific” has been becoming increasingly significant in the international political arena. In August 2016, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe proposed a policy of “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” (FOIP) as Japan’s new diplomatic vision at the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) VI held in Kenya. The FOIP strategy was supported by the Donald Trump administration followed by the renaming of the United States Indo-Pacific Command. However, China has viewed the FOIP as a containment strategy against the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The FOIP vision is unclear for general observers, and it might cause a security dilemma with the Chinese BRI. Is it possible for the FOIP vision to coexist with China’s BRI, or are these two strategic visions destined to clash with each other? In an attempt to answer these questions, the article aims to provide multiple perspectives of the FOIP concept by applying international relations (IR) theory. This article warns that the FOIP and the BRI are likely to bring about diplomatic tension that could be escalated into a military skirmish over the territorial dispute. In order to avoid the possible military clash, it finally seeks to explore possible future pathways of the peaceful coexistence of the two visions in the Indo-Pacific region.

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Introduction: Emergence of Japan’s Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) Vision

The concept of “Indo-Pacific” has been developed in international politics over time. Historically, the United States Pacific Command (current US Indo-Pacific Command), established as the oldest and largest US unified commands in Hawaii in 1947, had been responsible for the peace and security of the Indo-Pacific region throughout the Cold War era as well as the post-Cold War period (US Indo-Pacific Command, 2020). In 2007, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe delivered a speech at the Indian Parliament and pointed out the necessity of Japan’s commitments to harmonising the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2007). Based on the recognition of the two oceans, Japan has prioritised its maritime security in its defence and strategic policies (Komori, 2018). In addition, the Australian government used the word “Indo-Pacific” more than 50 times in its *Defence White Paper* published in 2013. The Australian Department of Defence emphasised the economic, strategic and military importance of the Indo-Pacific region for the defence of Australia and the region (Australian Government Department of Defence, 2013).

Since the late 2010s, the Indo-Pacific has been a focus in the study of international politics. Notably, a shift from the “Asia-Pacific” to the “Indo-Pacific” as a geopolitical sphere has been recognisable, and the latter has been increasingly becoming an important concept both in academia and the political arena (Jain, 2018).

A concept of “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” (FOIP) as Japan’s new diplomatic vision was officially proposed by Prime Minister Abe in his keynote speech at the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) VI held in Kenya in August 2016 (Shiraishi, 2018). Since the announcement of the FOIP by the prime minister, a large number of articles on the vision have been published in Japan and the world (Aizawa, 2018). The Abe administration promoted the FOIP as a core diplomatic strategy, but it was pointed out that its purposes and significance are unclear (Valencia, 2018). The reason why Japan’s FOIP is vague is because of its “lack of clarity about what is new in the FOIP” (Lindgren, 2019: 39). Indeed, norms and values in the FOIP are not necessarily new, and Japan has promoted these ideas since the end of the Second World War (Sasae, 2019). As a matter of fact, the Japanese government made “slow and steady” diplomatic commitments to the Indo-Pacific region (Enval, 2020). It was also argued that Japan had already made commitments to the maritime security of the Indo-Pacific over a decade (Thankachan, 2017). Another fundamental reason why the FOIP seems to be elusive and incomprehensible lies in the fact that the concept itself contains dual nature that encapsulates two different elements, namely international competition and international cooperation (Kamiya, 2020).

Importantly, the complicatedness of Japan’s FOIP concept can be better understood by applying multiple perspectives of international relations (IR) theory, but few previous research provided theoretical aspects regarding the FOIP scholarship. Although some earlier works conducted theoretical analyses on the FOIP, their theoretical perspectives are apt to be limited to a dichotomy between realism and liberalism (Watanabe, 2019). Moreover, most previous studies have not offered theoretical analysis through a lens of “analytical eclecticism” and did not explore solutions to a regional “security dilemma” potentially generated by the FOIP (Hayward-Jones, 2018). Here, it is important to examine whether a clash between Japan’s FOIP vision and the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is unavoidable or not. Accordingly, this paper aims to analyse the FOIP concept from the perspectives of international relations theory (realism, liberalism, and constructivism) in an application of “analytical eclecticism” and to examine whether Japan’s FOIP and China’s BRI are destined to clash with each other, or the peaceful coexistence of these two strategic visions is feasible in the Indo-Pacific region.

Japan’s Foreign and Security Policy in IR Theory and Analytical Eclecticism

IR theory is applicable to the analysis of Japan’s foreign and security policy in general. The theoretical premise of realism is that international politics is inherently a “power struggle” for survival and national interests (Morgenthau, 2006). This world view stems from a political philosophy that human nature is based on egoism engaging in a “war of all against all”, as described by Thomas Hobbes (Hobbes, 1962). Theorists of neorealism argue that the inherent nature of the international system is “anarchy”, and the balance of power and alliance system are vital for the security and defence policy of a sovereign state (Waltz, 1979). Japan’s security policy has been shaped in consistent with these realist arguments. Being surrounded by nuclear-armed states, Japan has attempted to normalise its defence capabilities, has maintained and strengthened the Japan-US military alliance (Green, 1995), and has expanded its security alignments with strategic partner countries (Wilkins, 2019a).

At the same time, however, Japan’s security and defence policy is congruous with the premise of liberalism that values the altruistic nature of human beings and international cooperation by sovereign states in an anarchic world. Liberal theorists argue that the peaceful coexistence of sovereign states is achievable by promoting multilateral disarmament and establishing international organisations based on international law, as suggested by Immanuel Kant (Kant, 1939). As envisioned by Kant, Japan’s security policy has been influenced by its “peace clause”, Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution that stipulates renunciation of war and non-possession of armed forces. Indeed, Japan’s defence capabilities have been consistently restricted by Article 9 as well as the so-called “culture of antimilitarism” in the post-war Japanese society (Berger, 1998). Japan’s security policy based on the Peace Constitution is consistent with “liberal internationalism”, and Japan’s contribution to international peace and security is regarded as Japanese “pragmatic liberalism” (Berger, Mochizuki and Tsuchiyama, 2007).

In addition to these two leading IR theories, constructivism has been developed as an alternative approach in the study of international politics. Constructivists analyse “norm” and “identity” that construct sovereign states which are composing international relations (Wendt, 1999). Since combining both realist and liberalist perspectives, constructivism is referred to as the “liberal-realist theoretical approach” (Kegley and

Wittkopf, 2006: 52). Constructivists accept the premise of neorealism that international relations is anarchic but argue that anarchy with international competition is “what states make of it” and transformation of institution and identity for international cooperation is possible (Wendt, 1992). From a constructivist viewpoint, “pacifism” as a core norm that constructs Japan’s identity has been analysed (Gustafsson, Hagström, and Hanssen, 2019), and Japan’s “security identity”, such as a pacifist state, a UN peacekeeper, a normal state, and a US ally, can be observed in an eclectic manner (Akimoto, 2013).

In analysing Japan’s foreign and security policy, it is useful to employ IR theories as well as “analytical eclecticism”. According to Peter Katzenstein, the theoretical spectrum of international relations is broad, and the theoretical preferences of analysts (realist, liberalist and constructivist) on Japan’s security policy are too wide and varying. With a view to integrating these perspectives of international relations theory, Katzenstein set forth analytical eclecticism, noting: “Some writings on Japanese security may, in the future, be able to take a more eclectic turn, by incorporating elements drawn from three different styles of analysis – the testing of alternative explanations, the rendering of synthetic accounts, and historically informed narratives” (Katzenstein, 2008: 3). Notably, Kai He applied the three theoretical aspects to the study of the FOIP to analyse the concept as “balancing strategy”, “institutional setting”, and “ideational construct” (He, 2018), but he did not investigate the FOIP framework as Japan’s foreign and security vision. Accordingly, this paper applies orthodox theories of international relations and analytical eclecticism in order to offer these three theoretical perspectives on Japan’s FOIP framework. Finally, this article attempts to investigate whether the peaceful coexistence of Japan’s FOIP and China’s BRI is achievable in the Indo-Pacific region.

Realist Perspectives: Japan’s FOIP Vision in International Competition

The FOIP can be comprehended through a lens of theoretical elements of realism that values national interests and balance of power. From a classical realist viewpoint, national existence, political independence, and territorial integrity are supreme priorities in the national strategy of a sovereign state. Therefore, Japan’s FOIP policy should be inextricably connected with the national defence policy (Koga, 2020). From a perspective of geopolitical realism, it was observed that Japan as a “sea power” is in competition with the BRI promoted by China as a rising “land power” (Akimoto, C., 2018). From a traditional realist perspective, it has been observed that Japan’s FOIP is strategised against the Chinese BRI as a “propaganda rivalry” (Matsumura, 2019). In this kind of realist viewpoint, Japan’s FOIP strategy can be seen as a countermeasure or hedge against the rise of China and its BRI vision (Pan, 2014).

In terms of a theoretical premise of neorealism or structural realism that values the importance of the balance of power in an anarchic system (Waltz, 2000), the FOIP is a strategic vision to reinforce the Japan-US military alliance and build a “strategic equilibrium” in the Indo-Pacific region (Chellaney, 2018). On the basis of the Japan-US alliance, Prime Minister Abe has supported the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) with Australia and the United States since 2006 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2006) and stressed the necessity of strategic alignment with Australia and India, dubbing it the “quadrilateral strategic dialogue” or the “quad” in 2007 (Rudd, 2019). Abe moreover set forth a concept of Asia’s democratic “security diamond” in his article published by *Project Syndicate* on December 27, 2012 (Abe, 2012). In the article, Abe argued that Japan should strengthen its strategic partnerships with Australia and India in order to maintain peace, stability, freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific Ocean, where China had increased its military expansion (Ibid). Obviously, Abe’s strategic approach to the Quad and security diamond is consistent with a policy of balance of power. The FOIP strategy can be seen as an updated version of the Quad or security diamond vision from a realist strategic viewpoint.

The FOIP vision proposed by Abe was adopted by the Donald Trump administration that replaced its rebalance strategy of the Barack Obama administration with the US version of FOIP strategy (Akimoto, S., 2018). American realists set forth the concept of “offshore balancing” strategy as a US grand strategy (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2016), and it can be observed that the FOIP can be inherently consistent with the offshore balancing against China’s BRI concept. In accordance with the adaptation of the FOIP strategy, the US Pacific Command was renamed the US Indo-Pacific Command on May 30, 2018 (Copp, 2018). In the meanwhile, the US Indo-Pacific strategy as a realist approach brought about a security dilemma with China that perceives the Quad and the US strategy as a “containment strategy” against the rising Chinese military power (Chen, 2018). South Korea also found the US Indo-Pacific strategy a dilemmatic strategy as it would force the country to choose between China and the United States (Kim, 2018). In addition, although the

quad partners are basically supportive of the FOIP vision, Australia and India have been cautious about the security dilemma with China. For Australia, China is the largest trade partner, and it is not logical for Canberra to bring about “unnecessary anxieties” for Beijing (Brewster, 2018). India also showed its wary posture and insisted that it would be ideal for the FOIP to be “inclusive” to other countries, especially China (Horimoto, 2018). As another regional middle power, Canada has shown both understanding and hesitation to Japan's FOIP vision (Berkshire and Wilkins, 2019). The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) furthermore expressed their concerns over the FOIP vision concerning ASEAN's “centrality” as well as possible security dilemma with China (Kausikan, 2018). Ultimately, there has been a fear about the so-called “Thucydides's trap” regarding the US-China hegemonic competition in the Indo-Pacific region (Allison, 2015). For this reason, the Indo-Pacific countries are cautious about being entrapped in a trade war or potential military clash between the two great powers, as warned by a theorist of offensive realism (Mearsheimer, 2001). In other words, the FOIP strategy as a traditional realist approach as “minilateralism” has been still underdeveloped and ultimately faced with the traditional security dilemma (Tow, 2019).

Liberal Elements: Japan's FOIP Vision for International Cooperation

On the contrary, the Japanese government has placed an explicit emphasis on “liberal” aspects of the FOIP vision. If Tokyo appropriately promotes the FOIP vision, it has the potential to become an “attractive liberal alternative” to China's BRI (Brown, 2019). According to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the FOIP vision is based on the two diplomatic concepts: “diplomacy that takes a panoramic perspective of the world map” and “proactive contribution to peace” (proactive pacifism) based on the principle of “international cooperation” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2019a). In the premise of neoliberalism, “international cooperation” among nations is achievable and desirable even in an anarchic world, where the countries are mutually interdependent (Nye and Keohane, 1977). In essence, the primary purpose of Japan's FOIP vision shared by its partner countries is the “preservation of the liberal, rule-based international order across the Indo-Pacific” (Bassler, 2019b: 50). In this sense, the diplomatic philosophy of Japan's FOIP is fundamentally consistent with international cooperation as a premise of neoliberalism.

Japan's FOIP vision is designed to make proactive contributions to the peace, stability, and development of the two major continents, namely Asia that has been rapidly developing and Africa that possesses the tremendous potential for development. The commitments to the development of the high-quality infrastructure of the FOIP countries can be regarded as international cooperation and mutual interdependence in the Indo-Pacific region. Moreover, the Japanese government suggested that the FOIP could be evolved into “international public goods” that is a liberal element and could contribute to the peace, stability, and prosperity of the international community (Moravcsik, 1997). Theoretically speaking, moreover, it can be argued that if Japan's FOIP concept aims to shape a non-war community by democratic countries, the vision is congruous with “democratic peace” scholarship as a liberal peace theory (Macmillan, 2004). Likewise, the FOIP vision can be regarded as part of the regional integration process, which stems from a theoretical premise of liberalism (Haas, 1961).

Specifically, what are the liberal elements of Japan's FOIP? The FOIP proposed by the Japanese government intends to facilitate international cooperation with the following three pillars: 1) promotion and establishment of the rule of law, freedom of navigation, and fundamental values (democracy, human rights, and freedom), 2) pursuit of economic prosperity (improving connectivity and strengthening economic partnership including EPA/FTAs as well as investment treaties), and 3) commitment for peace and stability (capacity building on maritime law enforcement, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR), non-proliferation, peace operations, etc.) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2019b).

First, the Japanese government promised to cooperate with other countries that share fundamental principles and the vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific by facilitating strategic communication in the international arena. For example, the FOIP vision has been discussed in an international conference, such as the Shangri-La Dialogue organised by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) (Choong, 2019). Although the freedom of navigation is categorised as a military operation, it has been explained that the measure is taken for protecting the “liberal rules-based order” (Wirth, 2019: 488).

Second, the government has tried to improve: a) “physical connectivity” including quality infrastructure development (ports, railways, roads, energy, and ICT), b) “people-to-people connectivity” through human

resources development, and c) “institutional connectivity” through facilitating customs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2019b). In particular, the FOIP vision aims to strengthen economic partnerships including EPA/FTAs and investment treaties. In this sense, Tokyo plans to maintain its commitments to both the Japan-US bilateral free trade as well as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) (Akimoto, 2021a).

Third, Japan hopes to contribute to capacity-building assistance to countries in the Indo-Pacific region. For instance, capacity-building of maritime law enforcement as well as maritime domain awareness (MDA) are imperative. In addition, it is expected that Japan contributes to regional cooperation in such fields as HA/DR, anti-piracy, counterterrorism, and non-proliferation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2019b). These agendas for Japan's FOIP vision, especially in the field of peace operations, are consistent with international cooperation as a liberal premise as well as Japan's “proactive contribution to peace” in a mutually interdependent world.

Constructivist Aspects: Japan's Relational Identity in the Indo-Pacific Region

According to arguments of constructivism, it is important to analyse “norm”, “idea,” and “identity” that construct a sovereignty state on the basis of the premise that “anarchy is what states make of it” (Wendt, 1992). Indeed, Japan's FOIP vision emphasises the importance of “rule making” and “norm-setting” as well as shared “universal values” (Heiduk and Wacker, 2020). Some constructivist researcher, especially Ling Wei, proposes the framework of “developmental peace” in observing the FOIP concept, arguing that sustainable peace is achievable in the Indo-Pacific region (Wei, 2020). Moreover, some researchers have offered an optimistic future pathway of the FOIP so long as China promotes its BRI vision based on norms, such as “peaceful coexistence” and “non-interference” (He and Li, 2020: 6).

With regard to “identity,” Japan as an “Indo-Pacific state” cannot escape from its historical past as a former aggressor and militarist state in wartime. Hence, it is fair to observe that Japan's national identity has been shaped in relationships with “external entities” (Ibid), especially its neighbour states, such as Russia, China, and South and North Korea. Similarly, a relational constructivist approach provides an analysis of Japan's identity politics with its neighbour states (Lindgren, W. and Lindgren, P., 2017). In this view, Japan's FOIP vision has been faced with its past conducts and relational identity with its neighbouring countries of the Indo-Pacific.

As long as Beijing regards the FOIP as an “anti-China project with limited economic vision and inclusivity”, it would be difficult for Japan to effectively promote the diplomatic vision in the Indo-Pacific region (Palit and Sano, 2018: 2). For this reason, it is strategically imperative for Tokyo to encourage Beijing to comprehend the purposes of the FOIP vision and its compatibilities with the Chinese BRI. Moreover, Japan, as a former aggressor state would need to make diplomatic endeavours for confidence-building and mutual understanding regarding the Senkaku/Daoyu Islands (Brown, 2018). Likewise, Japan is required to make sensible diplomatic commitments to Taiwan that also claims territorial sovereignty over the disputed islands. In the case of Taiwan over which China has exerted “sharp power” and political influence (Bassler, 2019a: 41), Japan's FOIP vision is expected to be free, open, and inclusive to China and Taiwan as well. For Japan, the FOIP is a diplomatic vision for co-prosperity in the Indo-Pacific, but unfortunately, it reminds Japan's neighbours of the memory of the “Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere” that justified Japan's expansionistic policy advocated by Imperial Japan during the 1930s and 1940s (Lai, 2018). With these responses in mind, Japan's FOIP diplomacy is expected to overcome its negative historical legacy vis-à-vis neighbour states in the Indo-Pacific.

Clearly, if Japan places excessive emphasis on military and strategic aspects of the FOIP concept, it will cause a security dilemma with China. Due to the possible security dilemma between Japan and China as well as concerns of ASEAN member states, the Japanese government “stopped calling FOIP a strategy and relabelled it as a vision” at the end of 2018 (Soeya, 2019: 16). This can be regarded as a normative readjustment of Japan's FOIP concept in relation to its neighbouring countries in the Indo-Pacific. Japan's normative readjustment regarding its FOIP concept is a diplomatic consideration for the countries in the Indo-Pacific region, diluting its strategic implication for the Chinese BRI.

It has been thought that the Japanese government considers its engagement with the BRI was unnecessary (Okano-Heijmans and Kamo, 2019: 2), but it would be necessary for Japan to continue expressing its understanding and conditional support for the BRI vision so that the two visions can coexist in the long term (Hosoya, 2019). From a relational constructivist viewpoint, it is significant for Japan to face its regional identity and the historical legacy in the Indo-Pacific area. In light of the constructivist approach, the FOIP in an anarchic international system is “what states make of it”, and it is critical for Japan to ponder its relational identity with other Indo-Pacific countries and normative readjustment to effectively facilitate its FOIP diplomacy in the region.

The Clash or Peaceful Coexistence of Japan's FOIP and China's BRI?

As discussed in this article so far, Japan's FOIP vision has dual nature through the eclectic lens of international relations theory. It can be observed that the Japanese government has deliberately insisted on the liberal elements of the FOIP, and has strategically obfuscated the realist intentions so as not to cause diplomatic tensions with Beijing. This is why the purposes of Japan's FOIP vision seem to be ambivalent for the general observers. In essence, the FOIP vision is composed of two theoretical elements: international competition as a realist strategy and international cooperation as a liberal vision. Then, which theoretical approach should the Japanese government adopt in order to avoid the security dilemma with China? Is Japan's FOIP diplomacy destined for a clash with China's BRI vision? Or is it possible for the two regional powers to avoid the clash?

Importantly, it has been argued that Japan's FOIP concept is not in opposition to the Chinese BRI, and it has been becoming more comprehensive and inclusive for regional cooperation in the Indo-Pacific (Kitaoka, 2019). Politically, it would be reasonable for Tokyo to consider the inclusiveness of Japan's FOIP vision in relation to China's BRI through administrative dialogues and international conferences. Economically, Japan based on the FOIP vision would be able to facilitate a trilateral free trade agreement with China and South Korea, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), as well as the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP).

Strategically, it is possible for the US Indo-Pacific Command to invite China to their annual joint military exercises with a view to properly promoting mutual confidence building in the Indo-Pacific sphere. As a matter of fact, the United States had invited the Chinese and Russian Forces to the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercise in the Obama administration. The Trump administration in 2018 decided to disinvite China to the RIMPAC (Freiner, 2018), yet it is still feasible for the Biden administration to invite China and Russia to the RIMPAC again on condition that the Chinese and Russian Forces would adhere to the principles of the RIMPAC. In addition, Japan and the European Union (EU) have conducted joint naval patrols in the South China Sea in order to keep Chinese territorial expansion in check (Berkofsky, 2020), and there needs to be proper diplomatic communication between Tokyo and Beijing regarding the purpose of the joint exercise, which is identical with that of the FOIP vision. Such joint military exercises would aid in facilitating confidence building as well as promoting the FOIP vision in the region.

In the case of Japan-Australia relations, Japan has substantially overcome its negative historical past and transformed its identity as a former aggressor that conducted air bombing on Darwin and submarine attacks against Sydney harbour during the Asia Pacific War. Notably, the Japanese Self-Defence Forces joined the Australia-US bilateral military exercise, Talisman Sabre, on Australian soil (Ministry of Defense of Japan, 2019). In this respect, within the frameworks, such as the American “hub-and-spoke” system and Japan-Australia “security alignment” (Wilkins, 2019b), Japan's negative historical past has been transformed in light of the Japan-Australia bilateral relationship. In this regard, Japan needs to facilitate bilateral reconciliation with China so that it could promote the FOIP vision in a way that is congruous with the Chinese BRI. Japan's policy toward the BRI shifted from “non-participation” to “conditional engagement”, and it can be regarded as a realistic risk-hedging strategy (Ito, 2019), as well as a cooperative liberalist measure as well. From realist and liberalist perspectives, therefore, the FOIP vision can be promoted by Japan and the United States in an increasingly mutually interdependent Indo-Pacific region. Nevertheless, from a constructivist viewpoint, the future of the success of Japan's FOIP vision depends on Japan's relational identity and the coexistence with the Chinese BRI in a free, open, inclusive, and peaceful Indo-Pacific region.

Having said that, one cannot rule out a possibility that Japan's FOIP is likely to clash with China's BRI over their fault line, i.e. the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. The United States moreover has considered China to be a strategic rival in the Indo-Pacific sphere. Hence, it is fair to observe that the US Indo-Pacific strategy as well as Japan's FOIP vision are in competition with China's grand strategy, namely the BRI. China's BRI as a grand strategy is composed of multi-layered strategies, such as the String of Pearls, anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities, salami-slicing tactics, military technology innovation in the field of space, cyberspace, electromagnetic spectrum, and artificial intelligence (AI) (Akimoto, 2021b). It has been pointed out that Beijing furthermore plans to double the stockpiles of nuclear warheads while developing new types of missiles as well as hypersonic weapons (Ibid). Therefore, the strategic implications of China's BRI vis-à-vis Japan's FOIP under the US Indo-Pacific strategy for their territorial dispute, as well as the diplomatic tension over the Taiwan Strait cannot be ignored. Such a military clash has the potential to be escalated into a regional and international armed conflict.

Conclusion

This article has examined the emergence of Japan's FOIP vision from multiple theoretical perspectives. From the realist perspective, Japan's FOIP vision entails the aspect of international competition and values security arrangements, such as the Japan-US military alliance, the TSD, and the Quad, for national survival and balance of power in an anarchic nature of international politics in the Indo-Pacific region. Japan's FOIP vision was adopted by the Trump administration as the US Indo-Pacific strategy in competition with China's BRI. Whereas the ASEAN countries are apt to keep their distance from the US Indo-Pacific strategy so as not to be dragged into a potential military skirmish between China and the United States. In the meanwhile, European countries, such as the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden, share the strategic value of Japan's FOIP vision, forming Indo-Pacific security alignments against China's BRI (Akimoto, 2021b).

In light of the liberal perspective, on the other hand, Japan's FOIP vision includes elements of international cooperation based on Japan's core diplomatic policy, i.e. proactive contribution to peace (proactive pacifism) in the mutually interdependent world. In this respect, the FOIP can be regarded as international public goods among democratic countries. As a matter of fact, Japan's FOIP vision is composed of the following three pillars for international cooperation: 1) promotion and establishment of the rule of law, freedom of navigation, and fundamental values, such as democracy, human rights and freedom, 2) economic prosperity including economic integration, such as the CPTPP, the RCEP, and the FTAAP, and 3) commitment for peace and stability, such as disaster relief, peace operations, and non-proliferation. Obviously, these three pillars of Japan's FOIP vision are consistent with liberal perspectives for international cooperation. In other words, the liberalist aspects indicate that Japan's FOIP vision can peacefully coexist with China's BRI.

From the constructivist viewpoint, Japan's FOIP vision is fundamentally connected with its national identity as one of the countries in the Indo-Pacific region. As an Indo-Pacific country, Japan's diplomatic ties with its neighbouring countries are of significance, given Japan's past as a military aggressor during the Asia Pacific War. Japan's FOIP vision might be considered to be a similar strategic initiative tantamount to the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere that the Empire of Japan facilitated in the pre-war and wartime periods. At the same time, however, a constructivist aspect suggests that Japan's FOIP could be congruous with China's BRI, and the peaceful coexistence of the two strategic visions could be achievable even under the anarchic region, although a possible military clash between the two strategic initiatives cannot be ruled out. A trigger of the international confrontation would be their territorial dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. The territorial dispute, therefore, needs to be resolved for the sake of the peaceful coexistence of the two strategic visions in the Indo-Pacific region. In conclusion, Japan's FOIP contains both realist and liberal elements that construct Japan's relational identity as an Indo-Pacific state. The clash of the two strategic visions is not unavoidable, so long as Japan would continue to properly balance both realist and liberal goals, namely international competition and international cooperation, for the purpose of peaceful coexistence in the Indo-Pacific region.

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The Evolution of the Syrian Humanitarian NGOs and External Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Syrian Crisis
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Conflict
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Syrian humanitarian sector was limited to two types of NGOs till the Syrian conflict started; traditional charities composing of religious or ethnic focus NGOs, and the Government Organised Non-Governmental Organisations (GONGOs) that were affiliated by governmental figures. They both failed to respond to the needs of civilians in non-governmental controlled areas. This has forced Syrians with limited or no previous experience in this sector to act immediately and independently. However, after the crisis erupted, the commitment to their case, availability of funds, and hospitality from the neighbouring countries evolved them very quickly to become the primarily organised responders in the non-governmental controlled territories. Those newly formed humanitarian groups tried to link humanitarian interventions with early recovery activities without losing the scope of being a voice advocating for the human rights of the innocents. The Syrian Humanitarian NGOs based in Turkey were delivering their assistance to the vulnerable communities inside Syria further than where they physically reach without even evaluating the risks that might affect their lives or their beloved families. In some cases, they were the only humanitarian actors in besieged areas as Rural Damascus or Eastern Aleppo and hard to reach locations as Rural Homs or Northern Hama. Those security threats are now less impactful on their existence compared with the political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental external challenges that they are facing and can highly affect their presence. The external challenges that they are witnessing that might affect not only the way they are operating but their sustainability as well. Those external challenges were focusing on political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental to form the well-known PESTLE analysis that categorises these external threats and risks. As new Syrian NGOs have spread within countries nearby as well as in the diaspora, this article will only focus on those that were based mainly in Turkey due to several reasons explained in the article.

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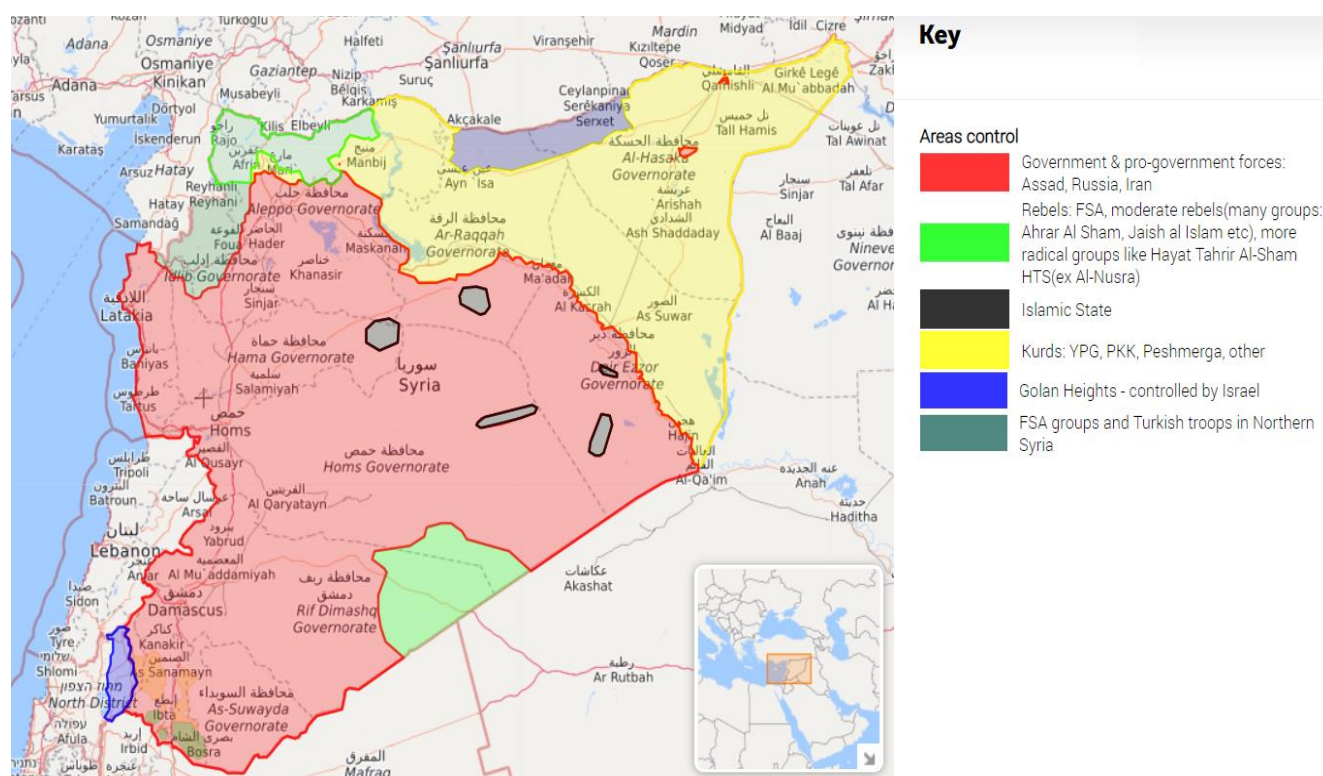
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Introduction

The Syrian conflict started in March 2011 after the civil demonstrations within the country transformed rapidly into civil unrest (Ferris and Kirisci, 2016). Then, in June 2012, it was classified by the International Committee of the Red Cross -ICRC as a civil war that affected the whole region (Meininghaus, 2016). After a decade of the Syrian conflict, more than 387 thousand were killed, and more than 205 thousand were recorded to be missed (BBC, 2021), 13.4 million were internally displaced (OCHA, 2021), together with around 5.6 million refugees in countries around the globe (UNHCR, 2021). The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR, 2017) and Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC, 2021) classified it to be the worst human-made crisis after the Second World War.

The country was divided into several territories, each under separate authorities (Khalaf, 2015). As shown in figure 1 by the Liveuamap website (2021), the Government of Syria is now controlling more than half of the country, where its presence is limited to the coast, southern and central regions. While the remaining areas, mainly the Northwest and Northeast of the country, is under the control of the various rebel groups and the Kurdish forces, respectively.

Figure 1: The divisions of the Syrian territories among the groups in June 2021



Source: <https://syria.liveuamap.com/> (2021)

Against all principles of International Humanitarian Law, the Government of Syria has used humanitarian aid as a tool of war, and politicised relief, thus breaching the humanitarian principles: Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, and Independence (Meininghaus, 2016). Even though there were over 1,400 registered humanitarian associations and charities before the crises (Taki, 2012), those organisations have still failed to respond to the needs of vulnerable people in the non-governmental controlled territories

(Meininghaus, 2016). In addition, legal and illegal organisations have come to the agenda as organisations that are considered 'Trojans' within the dominant nationalist system (Dag, 2018).

The vacuum in the humanitarian space that those non-governmental organisations-NGOs have created was covered by new grassroots foundations and diaspora organisations (Qayyum, 2011). Many of those grassroots charities moved their head offices to the countries nearby and registered there for several reasons; one of them is closed to the donors and international partners NGOs. These informal cross border operations, among other factors as well, have also encouraged the UN Security Council to approve the cross-border resolution 2165 in February 2014 that allowed UN agencies to respond to the needs of the non-governmental controlled areas from the countries nearby independently from the government regulations only with coordination and information sharing (Meininghaus, 2016).

These newly founded NGOs, which have limited or even no previous experience in the humanitarian field, have evolved rapidly, compared with the relevant theories discussing the development of humanitarianism listed by Michael Barnett's book *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (2011).

Within this article, a literature review indicates the types of organisations, the history of humanitarian NGOs, and theoretically their roles. Then a case study of Syrian humanitarian NGOs operating from Turkey responding to the communities in need inside Syria will follow the literature review to criticise those theories and show how those newly formed Syrian NGOs have developed and improved their responses to create their own fingerprint. It will then move to the external challenges that they are witnessing that might affect the way they are operating and their presence and sustainability. Those external challenges were listed according to the most famous PESTLE analysis that categorises external threats and risks between political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental.

As new Syrian NGOs were spread within countries nearby and in the diaspora, this article will only focus on those based mainly in Turkey due to several reasons. Firstly, Turkey is the hub for the most significant UN cross border operations (Humanitarian Aid, 2020). Secondly, Turkey has hosted the most significant number of those NGOs and facilitated their interventions for years. Thirdly, it is the most substantial experience of the writers as closely working with them from different perspectives: as a partnership focal point employee at several INGOs working and supporting SNGOs, directly through being a staff member with SNGOs, as a trainer providing independent consultancies, and as a member of networks and platforms that are consisted of the new Syrian NGOs.

The Role of Humanitarian NGOs

Organisations can be defined as a structured group of people who work, participate, coordinate, and support each other in a system to achieve a defined goal (Cunliffe, 2008). Organisations are mainly divided into three sectors as public organisations such as ministries, parliaments, or local councils; private organisations such as cooperatives, enterprises, or companies; and the third sector, as it is called in the UK, NGOs or private voluntary organisations, as they are known in the USA such as humanitarian or human rights organisations, or charities (Bromley and Meyer, 2014). Regardless of the different divisions, there are standard features among the organisation, such as the existence of goals, the structure of the team, the resources used, and the set of operations that runs the system (Hudson, 1999). NGOs are divided based on those services and programmes, including but not limited to humanitarian and emergency relief, human rights, development, democracy, peacebuilding, environmental (Barnett, 2011).

As Michael Harris clarified, people and particularly beneficiaries, who are the poorest of all, are the core of the NGOs as people are the main funders, motivators, and reason for existence for charitable organisations (Poulton and Harris 1991). In addition to the description of the NGOs as a group of citizens for the philanthropic goal supported by voluntary donations (OECD, 1988), humanitarianism is the compassion to help and provide aid to others (Barnett, 2011). The charity and philanthropy concepts have existed since the formation of humanity (Loch, 1910), with the term humanitarianism being officially used during the early nineteenth century (Barnett, 2011). According to Hudson, the charity was practised by early Egyptian citizens through a developed ethical code as a form of social support. It was also practised in India during the Buddhist Empire as well as the Greek and the Roman Empires. Christianity, Judaism, and Islam have also encouraged these sorts of actions and embedded them within the religion as a way to please God (Hudson,

1999). This ethical code did not have the same official or organised structure that humanitarianism has today. This gives us a summary of the role of humanitarian NGOs from the day they existed until now, which position people as the core of their goals.

Barnett divides humanitarianism into three different eras: "an imperial humanitarianism, from the early nineteenth century through the World War II; a neo-humanitarianism, from the World War II through the end of the Cold War; and a liberal humanitarianism, from the end of the Cold War to the present" (Barnett, 2011: 29). Perhaps the most important milestone during the imperial humanitarianism age was the establishment of the first international humanitarian organisation which is the International Committee of the Red Cross in 1863 by Henry Dunant, as a result of his witness on the impact of the Battle of Solferino on injured soldiers in 1859 (ICRC, 2010). States supported ICRC until the formation of the first Geneva Convention in August 1864 to govern the sick and wounded soldiers (Stroup, 2012). The main programmes for the humanitarian organisations that existed during the imperial humanitarianism period were more centralised as fighting slavery, in addition to supporting prisoners and soldiers of war.

In contrast to the imperial humanitarianism age, during the neo-humanitarianism age, hundreds of international NGOs were formed to help in the reconstruction of European countries devastated during World War II. In addition to the reconstruction of Europe, they also assisted in the development of populations within decolonised countries. The purpose of the NGOs in this age was to support vulnerable affected people outside the border of the hosting countries. This was done by either providing lifesaving relief assistance through the distribution of clothes, food, and medical supplies or through the establishment of new development projects that were needed for the post-war age, such as education and training, agriculture, water, and hospitals.

Though during the third age, liberal humanitarianism, thousands of local NGOs were formed, working closely with their international counterparts to develop their communities and recover them from the impact of poverty, war and natural disasters. This age was not mainly focusing on development but also advocating on behalf of the affected communities. The role of the NGOs in this age was not limited to the assistance they provide, whether relief assistance or development; it moves beyond that to cover the new shape of programmes such as lobbying for changing policies, convincing governments, and protecting civilians (OECD, 1988). This classification matches as well with David Korten's work who looked at the different stages of NGOs: starting with the relief and welfare, which provides the emergency assistance to individuals and families, moving to the community development that enhances the neighbourhoods and villages, then the sustainable system developments which support regional and national institutions and finally People's movements which change behaviour or policies (Lewis and Kanji, 2009).

Assessing External Threats against Organisations

Organisations are not operating in an isolated atmosphere; they are open systems surrounded by external factors (Senior and Fleming, 2006; Myers et al., 2012). This environment might either be an immediate stakeholder, e.g., suppliers, or it might be a contextual environment, e.g., the countries nearby (Myers et al., 2012). One of the best tools to identify the external environment is called the PEST or PESTLE Analysis (Senior and Fleming, 2006; Mullins, 2016; Myers et al., 2012). As shown in figure 2, the abbreviations of the following factors form the name of this tool: The Political, Economic, Social, and Technological factors (PEST); some other factors were added later to upgrade the tool, which are the Legal and Environmental ones (PESTLE).

In addition to legislation of operations, the political factors take governmental policies and actions into consideration. The economic factors understand the overall economy, the market functioning, and funding mechanisms. The social factors look at demographic areas. The technological factors check the use of technology and infrastructure. And finally, the environmental factors look at ecological life with relevant regulations.

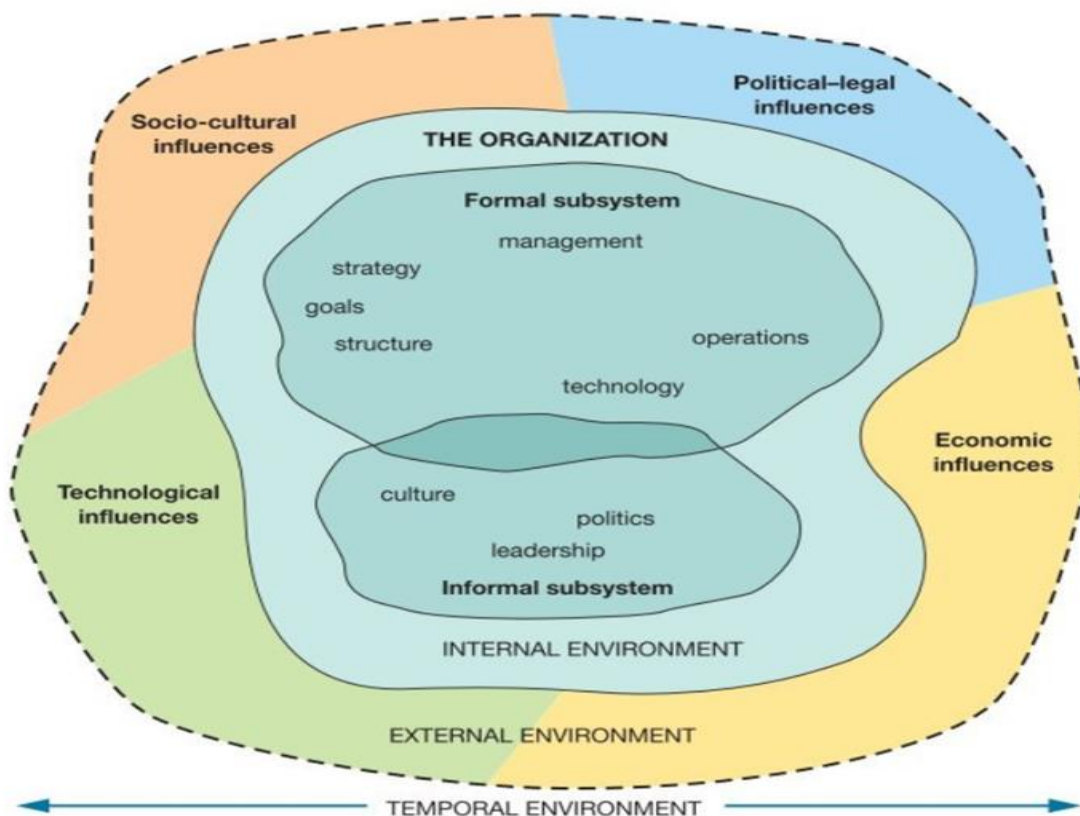
To understand each factor, a set of questions need to be answered within the organisation as follows: what does this factor specifically change, why does this factor make changes, how do the changes take place, how has this change affected the organisation, what is the effective duration of this factor on the organisation (Hughes, 2006)?

Methodology

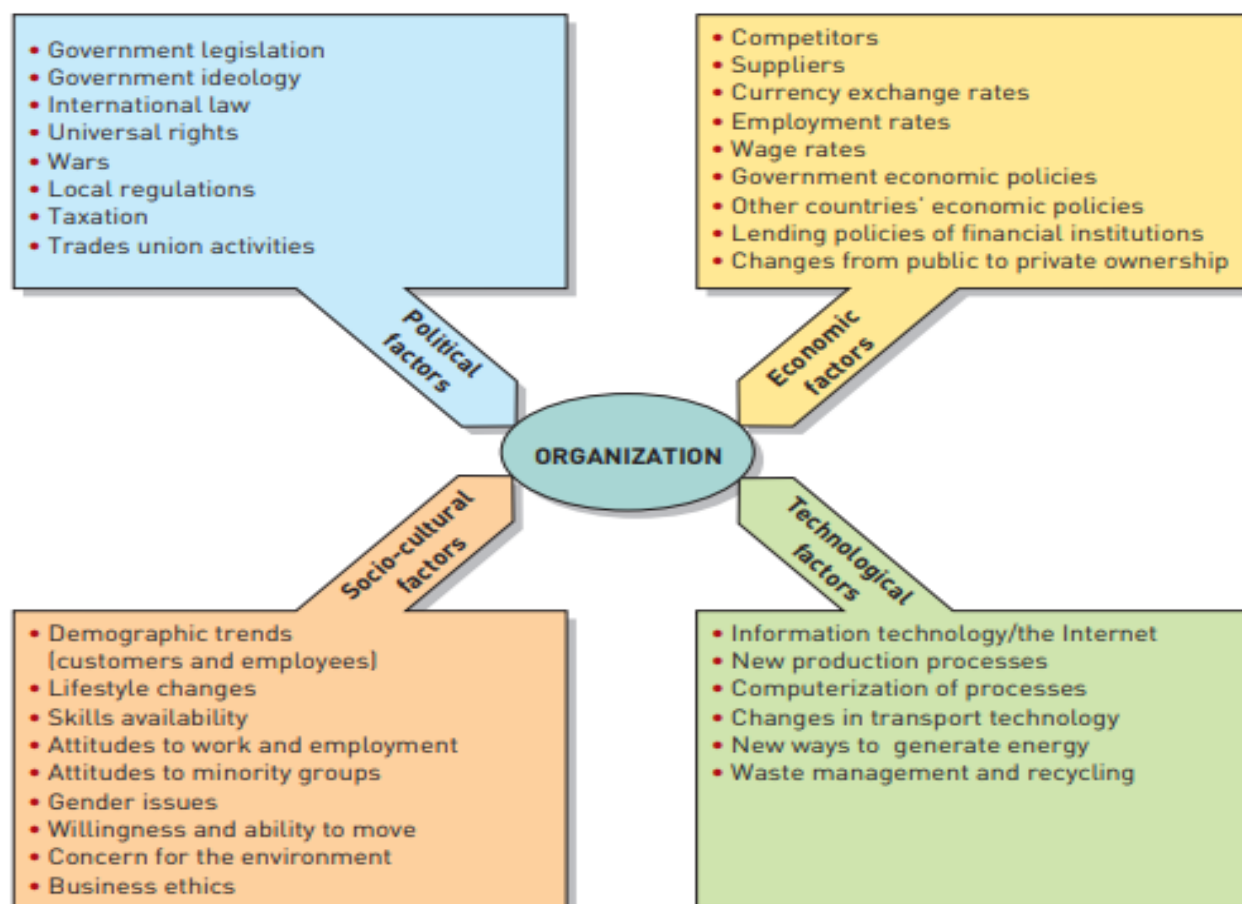
Although various valuable resources cover the humanitarian NGOs and their roles, only a few pieces of research and articles were made on the Syrian case. The available secondary resources can provide a broad overview of the context but with only limited details that cannot be used to build this research. Thus, a variety of primary data was obtained to seek the depth of the challenges, triangulate the data gathered, and study the recommended feedbacks that were tested. Those primary sources were structured surveys to fulfil the PEST- Political, Economic, Social, and Technological analysis, in addition to semi-structured interviews with key informants.

PEST or PESTLE analysis is the most useful tool that could assess and provide understanding for the multi-dimensional environment surrounding the organisational system (Senior and Fleming, 2006; Perera, 2017). It is a way together with the famous SWOT analysis form integrated method to strategical planning for organisations (Rastogi and Trivedi, 2016). Figure 3 demonstrates a deep understanding of PEST factors in the organisation. Therefore, the PEST version is used with integrating the legal and political challenges together while preferring to avoid focusing on the last category of the modified tool, which is the environment, as it needs a separate research focus to highlight those types of challenges and their effects within this article.

Figure 2: The organisational system operating in multi-dimensional environments



Source: Senior and Fleming, (2006: 32)

Figure 3: PEST factors and organisational change

Sources: Senior and Fleming, (2006: 36)

The primary data was a combination of qualitative information to know more about the evolution of their NGOs as well as quantitative to understand the external challenges and their scale. Both the surveys and the interviews targeted the senior management of the Syrian NGOs, such as chairpersons, directors, and chief executives. The research was an opportunity to engage with 20 Syrian NGOs and their members that are based in Turkey and operating in non-governmental areas. There are hundreds of Syrian NGOs registered and operated in Turkey, only 135 of them were registered with the UN OCHA platform by 2018 (OCHA, 2018). Out of these 135 registered NGOs with UN OCHA, 20 Syrian NGOs were selected for the survey covering the various categories that they might fall under, e.g., diaspora vs grassroots, humanitarian vs development or human rights NGOs as well as high vs low annual budgets trying to cover the various categories. 2 of those 20 surveyed NGOs were selected to be interviewed on their establishment process. Although these two were formed by the Syrian Diaspora living in the EU, they still have their biggest operational offices in Turkey and registered within the Turkish government and the UN OCHA platform.

Humanitarian NGOs in the Syrian Context

The History of Syrian Humanitarian NGOs

The evolution of the Syrian NGOs is very similar to the global process described by Michael Barnett with some singularities.

The charitable activities in Syria existed hundreds of years ago as a sort of community solidarity between the wealthy and poor neighbours living together in a closed environment (Atar, 2019). As stated above, the three main religions in Syria and the Middle East: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, supported and encouraged these charitable efforts. The religious leaders were also controlling some of these activities within the places of worship, convincing their followers that it is a way to get closer to God. Perhaps the first known structured faith-based charities were during the Ottoman empire. The first Christian and Islamic Syrian Charities are known as "the Association Saint Vincent" and "Al-Makassed Philanthropic Islamic Association" were founded in 1863 in Damascus and 1878 in Beirut, respectively (Ruiz de Elevira and Zintl, 2012). Tens of charities were established early in the 20th century that were either targeting specific population groups such as youth, orphans, women or elders, or religious sections such as Shia, Sunni, Orthodox, Catholic or even ethnicity such as Arab, Assyrian, Armenian. After the French Mandate was ended in 1946, a slight improvement in the existence of the charitable organisation as well as the type of interventions was noticed. The number of registered charities increased from 73 to 203 during the 1950s (Ruiz de Elevira and Zintl, 2012).

As in Michael Barnett global division for humanitarian work, the Syrian charities during that period can be classified under imperial humanitarianism (Barnett, 2011). These charities provided traditional assistance to the communities, such as sponsoring orphans, senior citizens, and poor families, providing medical treatment and education that was integrated with religious studies.

Charitable activism was blocked when the state of emergency was declared in the country after the Baath Party seized control in 1963. From that date till 2000, when Bashar Al-Assad took control of the presidency after the death of his father Hafez, the number of charities dropped from 596 to 513 as the regime at that time was not a fan of the civil society in any form, including the independent unions, human rights organisations, and others as they were seen as a threat to their leadership (Ruiz de Elevira and Zintl, 2012).

Within the first few years of the presidency of Bashar Al-Assad, the country has witnessed some sort of openness, things that were considered taboos, prohibited and prosecuted by his father's iron-hand way of control became less restricted in Bashar's era (Collins, 2018). That period was called Damascus Spring. It is worth mentioning that during that period, cell phones, internet, and satellite TV connections were officially permitted, the registration for new charities was allowed and encouraged by the government, the existence of independent media such as newspapers and magazines was approved, along with other civil activities as well.

Although the number of registered associations increased significantly to 1,400 in 2003, according to statistics from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, it was still less than other nearby countries such as Lebanon and Jordan that had 3,500 and 2,000 respectively (Taki, 2012). During that period, in addition to local philanthropic and faith-based charities, a new form of NGOs was established to accommodate the enthusiasm of the youth, which is the biggest category among all age groups. These new NGOs that were known as Government Organised Non-Governmental Organisations (GONGOs), were strongly affiliated with, if not managed directly by, government networks such as the president's wife and cousin (De Martino, 2017). The creation of such organisations was used mainly to show the openness of civil society in Syria and to attract funds from external donors (Ruiz de Elevira and Zintl, 2012). Syria Trust for Development which was established and led by Bashar's wife Asmaa Al-Assad, was the biggest among all, while Al-Bustan Association, another large charitable organisation, was established and led by Bashar's cousin Rami Makhlof.

Organisations during that era can be classified as neo-humanitarianism according to Michael Barnett definition. The GONGOs differed from charities as instead of keeping religious leaders at the top of the hierarchy; they kept regime allies and key connectors at the top. The activities that were implemented both by the faith-based charities and GONGOs were more developmental than emergency response focused, as

they worked on social development, environment and culture enhancements, and economic support such as the establishment of well-served hospitals, supporting the marriage of young couples, and skills development of unemployed citizens. The two types of organisations did not compete with each other for funding nor implementation, as each one of them has its audience and supporters. The faith-based charities were funded by the local businessmen and middle-class breadwinners and targeting their religious followers, whereas the GONGOs were mainly funded by external governmental funds and targeted the youth as secular non-religious.

The New Syrian Humanitarian NGOs

This did not last long. Due to the Syrian crisis in 2011 as part of the Arab spring, many young and mid-aged men and women tried to support the civilian victims of forced displacements outside those two types of organisations and in an informal way. The main reason behind this was mainly to respond independently outside the monitoring control of the regime. The rationale for such an action was to ensure that vulnerable civilians are not excluded from receiving the necessary assistance based on their political views or ethnicity. The seeding funds for such initiatives were mainly from the close networks of those new inexperienced aid workers. Subsequently, their efforts were adopted by the Syrian diaspora, who shared with them the same values and beliefs and funded their activities. The Syrian diaspora has tried to cover the gap in civil society, particularly the humanitarian sector, through reshaping those initiatives (Qayyum, 2011).

This has led to the formation then the development of new humanitarian NGOs different from the pre-existing faith-based charities and GONGOs. More than a year from the spark of the Syrian unrest, the Syrian government started chasing, arresting, torturing, and executing some of those new aid workers as they are operating outside the control of the regime. This has forced those philanthropic men and women to move their programmes to the opposition-held areas and manage operations from outside the country, such as Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, as it is easier to meet the donors and provide the humanitarian commodities (Atar, 2021). In addition to the grassroots groups, the Syrian diaspora has also formed some new NGOs in their host countries to ensure that their fund-raising efforts remain legitimate and sustainable. As the displaced grassroots groups formed offices for their newly established NGOs in the countries nearby, the diaspora NGOs have also registered their operational offices in Turkey, Lebanon, or Jordan to work closely with the affected communities inside Syria. Interviews were done with the Chairs of two of those Syrian diaspora NGOs in this regard: Dr Ayman Jundi and Dr Ghanem Tayara.

Dr Jundi, who is a Consultant in Emergency Medicine at Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust and a Clinical Senior Lecturer in Disaster Medicine at the University of Central Lancashire, co-founded one of those Syrian Diaspora NGOs named Syria Relief with other Syrian expatriates based in the UK (Alhousseiny, 2020; Alhousseiny, 2021). When asked about how Syrian relief was established, Dr Jundi stated that:

"Two of the group members decided to go over to southern Turkey, to see if they can buy food and warm clothes and tents for the civilians Syrian refugees, stranded in no-man's land. So, we started a very informal fund-raising campaign amongst friends and acquaintances. We raised over £20,000 in two days. The two friends went over and bought winter clothes, tents, and non-perishable food, and managed to get them smuggled across the borders into Syria".

As this was not an easy exercise nor the issues could be solved with one round of support, Dr Jundi and his colleagues tried to find other, more consistent and professional ways for providing support, this led to the registration in The Charity Commission in September 2011. Dr Jundi was asked if he ever thought their NGO would be as big as it is today, and he said:

"No, we most certainly never thought we would be here today when we were in the process of setting up the charity. Now, we have annual turnover of over £20 million. When we started, the trustees were doing everything themselves. We then had some volunteers, who then became employees. Now we have a nice office in Manchester with professional teams looking after programmes, fund-raising, media and marketing, and all other aspects of our work. We have offices in Turkey, Iraq and Jordan, staffed by experienced professionals who deal with the various aspects of humanitarian work on the ground. We now have eight Trustees, who now set the course and strategy of the charity and have no operational duties."

Dr Tayara, who is a Principal General Practitioner with an interest in Cardiology and is the Lead Prescriber at Bridge Surgery in Redditch as well as one of the founders of Syria Relief, has worked hard with other leaders of Syrian Diaspora NGOs to coordinate the assistance provided to the affected communities in Syria. This coordination has formed the Union des Organisations de Secours et Soins Médicaux-UOSSM (UOSSM, 2019). Dr Tayara was the chair of UOSSM and still has a leadership position within its Board. According to Dr Tayara, UOSSM was established by several independent Syrian Diaspora NGOs registered in the UK, USA, France, Canada, Germany, and Switzerland, with a main objective of UOSSM was to utilise the resources and assistance to prevent duplication of efforts as much as possible. And then, the NGO became a federation that combines UOSSM country members.

Many of those grassroots and diaspora charities moved their head offices to the host countries, thus became closer to the donors and international partner NGOs. The humanitarian intervention from the countries nearby was known as cross-border operations, and these organisations have resorted to cross-border operations because they mistrusted the Government of Syria's sincerity in delivering aid to needy communities.

According to UN OCHA, more than 135 NGOs registered in Turkey provide relief and assistance inside Syria (OCHA, 2018). That new generation of the Syrian Humanitarian NGOs, whether they were formed by expatriates or grassroots, can be classified as Liberal Humanitarianism according to Michael Barnett classification, due to their roles. Indeed, they were formed to support the civilians that were forgotten by the pre-existing NGOs due to the regime of strict control, but they also work as the voice of the vulnerable families and communities.

Even though these newly founded NGOs had limited or even no previous experience in the humanitarian field, but they have evolved rapidly compared with the relevant theories discussing the development of humanitarianism listed by Michael Barnett in his book *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism*.

They are now recognised as major actors in conflict resolution together with other forms of Civil Society Organisations, trying to put an end to the suffering of millions of Syrians living as prisoners, refugees or internally displaced with non-humanitarian conditions under the form of Syrian Civil Society Support Room (Hellmuller and Zahar, 2018).

The External Threats Facing the New Syrian NGOs

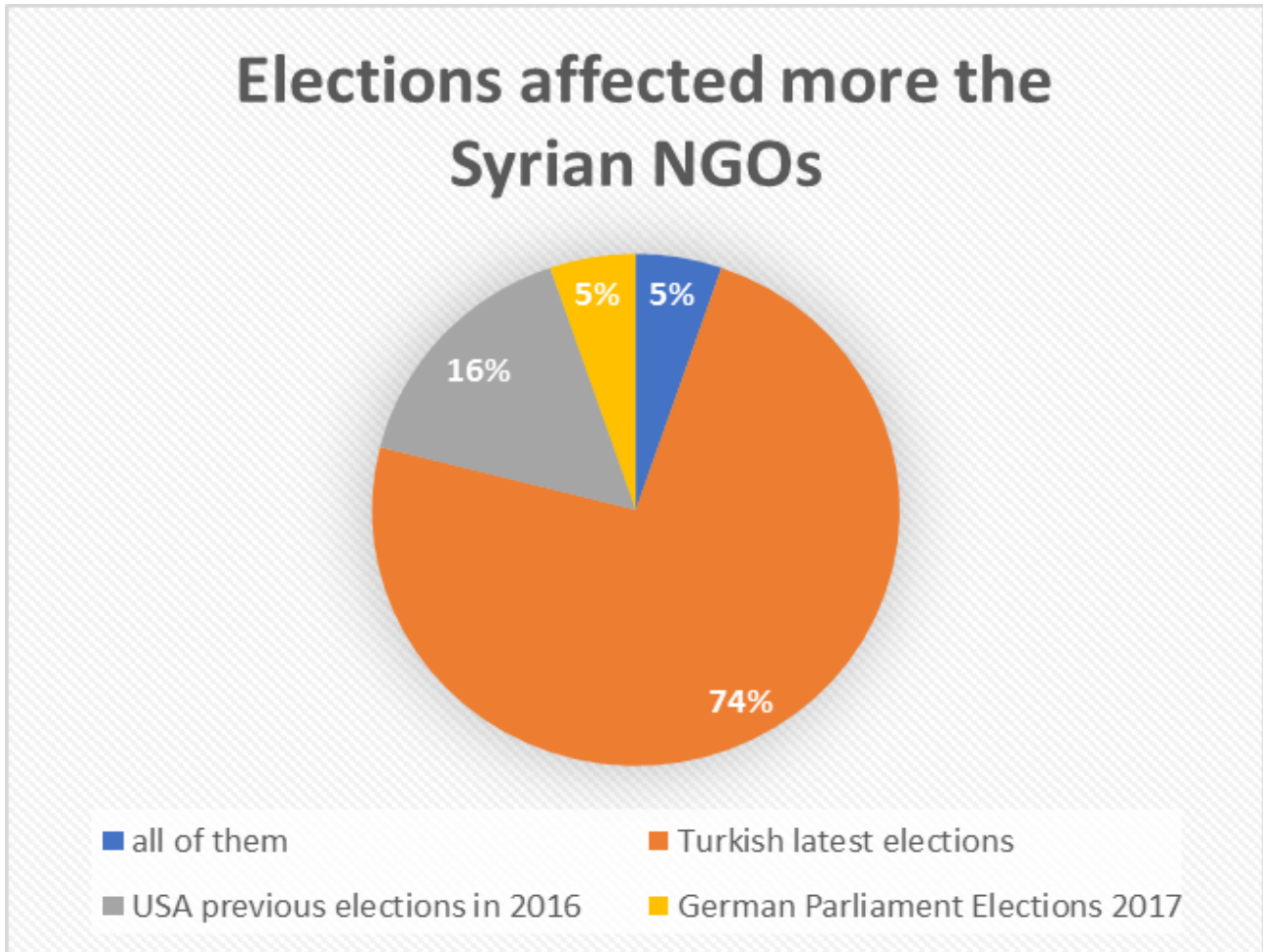
By November 2020, 42,418 UN full of aid trucks have crossed the border to be delivered through SNGOs, 2.5 million children were reached through education, 8.3 million individual benefited from the food security and livelihood assistance, 45.6 million medical cases were treated, 9.9 million individual were supported with non-food items and shelter, 2.2 million cases were supported with nutritional assistance, and 9.5 million individual has received clean water and wastewater services (UNOCHA, 2020). They knew that the majority of those reached beneficiaries were targeted from the Turkey hub. Thus, the humanitarian response from Turkey and particularly through the SNGOs were considered the main lifeline for the 4.1 million citizens living in the non-governmental controlled area in the northwest of the country where more than half of them were considered internally displaced from their own towns, villages, and cities. For this purpose, the following external challenges have been identified through the shared questionnaire. The identified challenges are divided into several categories according to the PESTLE analysis.

Political/Legal Challenges

Starting with the political challenges, as shown in figure 3, the latest elections in Turkey was the most affecting external political election on the Syrian NGOs working from Turkey. In contrast, the main impact of the USA elections in 2016 was the decrease of funds from the USA government to Northwest Syria during Trump's presidency compared with Obama's one. However, the Turkish elections have forced the government to increase and strengthen its regulations and procedures against SNGOs and Syrian Refugees in Turkey. This was due to the ruling party's loss in the latest elections, mainly as it has given a facilitation to Syrians since the beginning of the Syrian conflict. Those additional regulations have created uncertainty for SNGOs as they were not in place during their registration (Mellen and Lynch, 2017; Weise, 2017). However, the Turkish authorities audited SNGOs on those new regulations for backdated transactions. As a result,

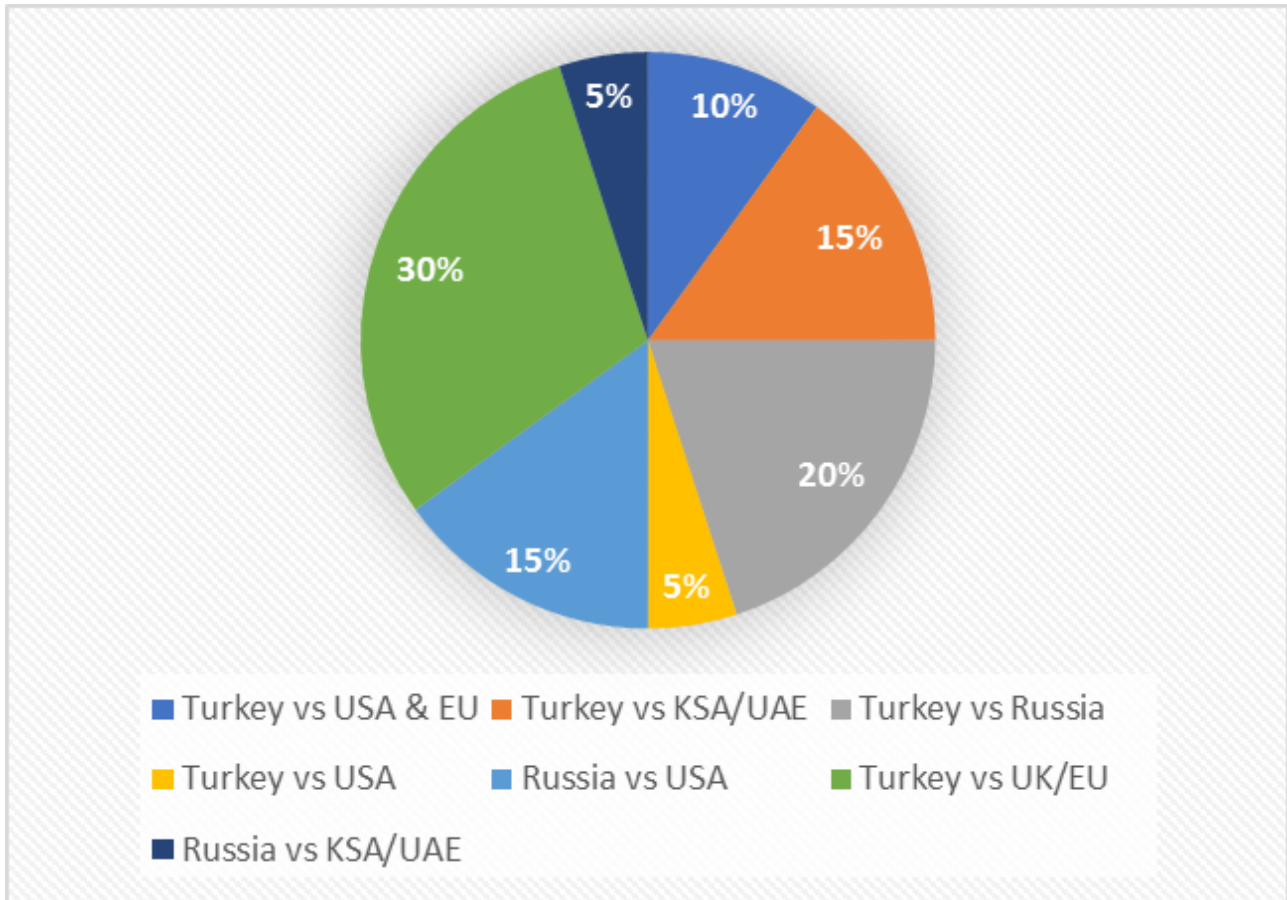
many SNGOs were penalised, so their fear about their destiny and the existence in Turkey as a country that used to host them increased.

Figure 4: The most affecting international elections on SNGOs

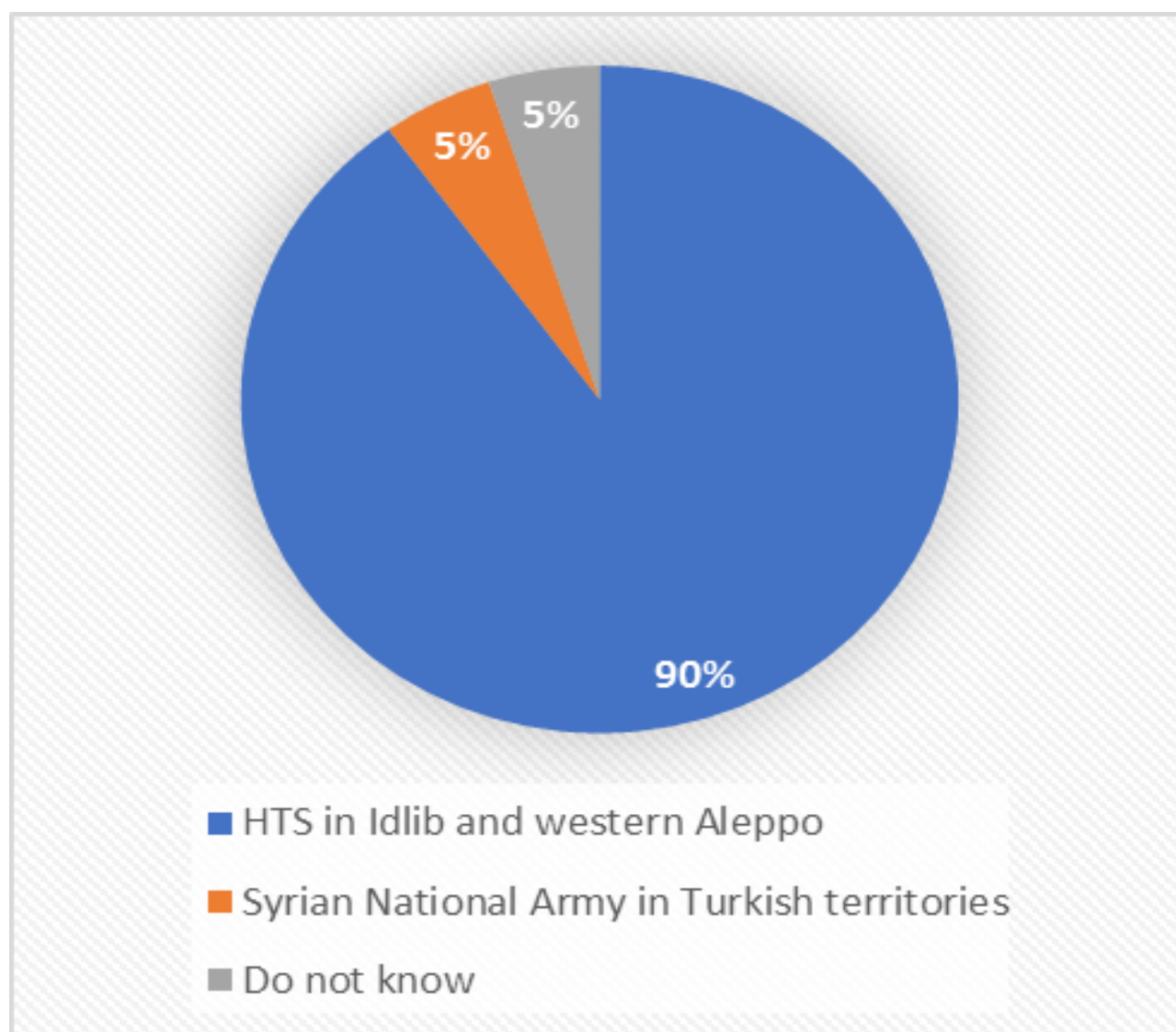


Working in the Northwest of Syria also changed after the Turkish elections as new additional regulations have also hampered the operations there. After the control of several territories in North Syria by the Turkish military forces and the Syrian armed groups affiliated, many western donors suspended their activities as political pressure on the Turkish move. This act has pushed the local Turkish authorities responsible for those Syrian territories to seek ways to increase operations there either by forcing or encouraging NGOs based in Turkey to shift part of their activities from Idlib to the Turkish controlled territories. The Turkish authorities linked the renewal of work permits for the non-Turkish humanitarian staff members, including Syrian refugees, to the level of programs in the Turkish controlled territories inside Syria. This action has forced NGOs to replace the Syrian humanitarian workers with Turkish citizens.

Figure 5: Political relationships primarily affecting SNGOs



Secondly, as shown in figure 4 and based upon the questionnaire responders, the tension between Turkey and EU/UK was the primary affecting international political relationships among the others followed by the coordination between Turkey and Russia, after that the tension between Turkey and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia / United Arab Emirates as well as between Russia and USA. The common impact of the deterioration of relations between Turkey and the other countries that used to fund the humanitarian programs in Northwest Syria is the decrease of their financial commitment as a means of pressure on Turkey. In contrast, the tension between Russia and the USA impacted the renewal of the UN Security Council Cross Border Resolution that legitimise the humanitarian operations of the UN Turkey Hub for Northwest Syria.

Figure 6: Opposition armed groups mostly affecting SNGOs

Thirdly, the conflicts between the armed groups in Northwest Syria have resulted in the full control of the classified radical group known as Hayat Tahrir Al Sham-HTS on Idlib and Western Aleppo. In contrast, the Syrian National Army, which is an opposition group affiliated with Turkey, has controlled the North of Aleppo and Ar Raqqa. As resulted in figure 5, the impact of HTS is much higher than that of the Syrian National Army. Significantly, HTS has negatively affected SNGOs after their ultimate control of Northwest Syria as this has jeopardised humanitarian operations and led donors to suspend stabilisations programs and decrease funds of humanitarian programs. HTS has imposed several threats on the NGOs' operations through taxation that they have requested in several methods, arrestment and pressure made on humanitarian and medical workers, and force for implementation as per their regulations. All of this has made them seen as the sole de facto authority, which was then used to form a governmental body under their lead named Syrian Salvation Government-SSG. The SSG has replaced various civil, administrative bodies in Idlib, such as the local councils and directorates of some services.

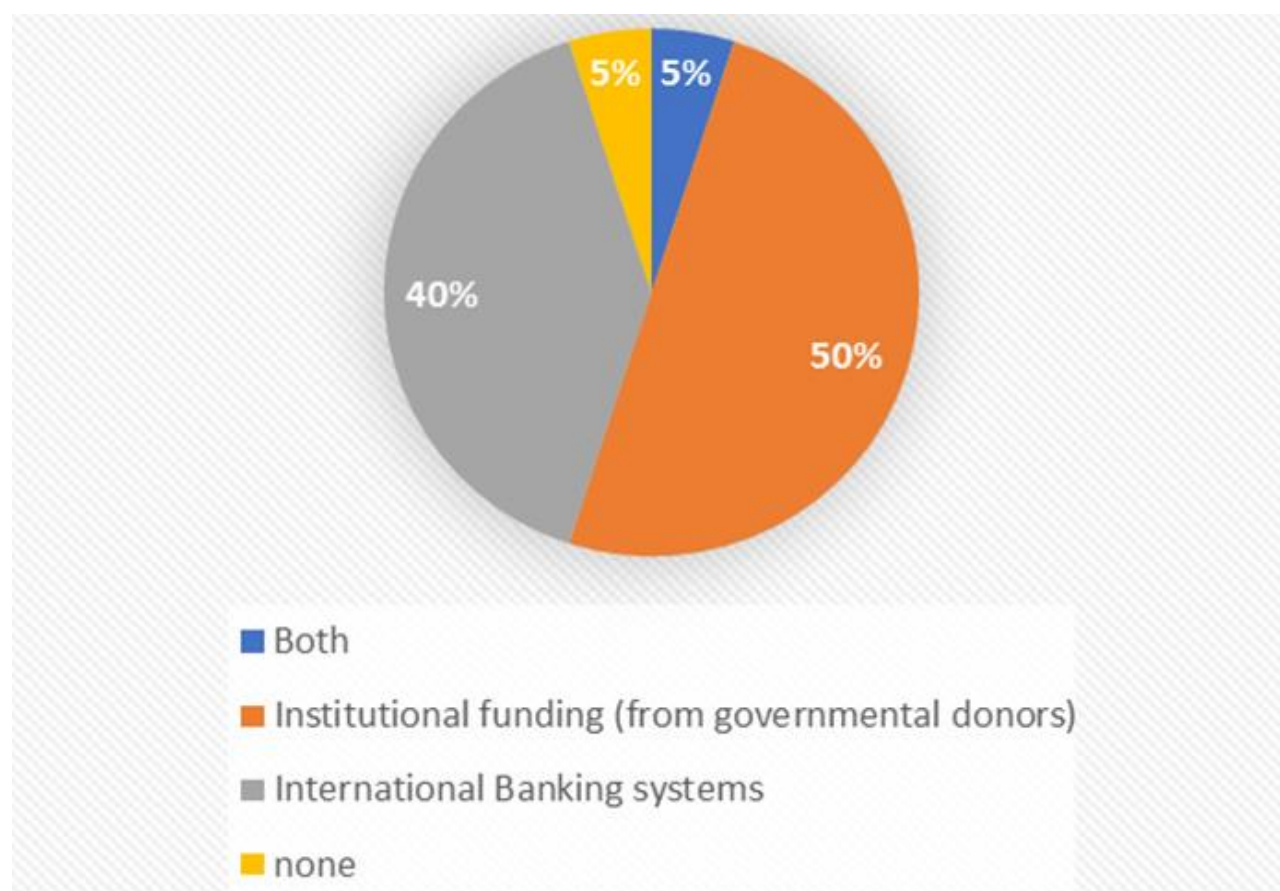
Fourthly, the shift in power dynamics inside Syria that resulted in gaining more territories by the Syrian government forces against various oppositional groups has affected negatively Syrian NGOs working from

Turkey. Some of those SNGOs were operating in farther locations than Turkish border governorates because they were targeting Rural Damascus and Homs at the centre of the country as well as Daraa at the southern region of the country. Those NGOs have lost access to those areas that led to the suspension of their programs, loss of facilities and assets, and displacement of their qualified staff members. Additionally, the loss of operational areas in North Hama and Southern Idlib has led to a massive flux of displaced families that SNGOs had limited financial capacities to respond. This limitation to accessible areas has strengthened the competition environment among SNGOs rather than enhancing the close coordination as they are now working harder to gain any grant opportunity.

Economic Challenges

Firstly, as shown in figure 6, half of the questionnaire responders linked the decrease of the institutional funding to the additional restricted global regulations and laws, especially those related to counter-terrorism. At the same time, most of the other responders linked the new regulations and laws to the barriers that they are facing in banking systems. It is noticed that many governments, especially donors, are overbalancing counter-terrorism regulations against humanitarian principles. Instead, they should not be facing each other; instead, they should be working with each other to support the most vulnerable civilians in the most challenging contexts. Thus, some of those governments and donors that used to support the Syrian humanitarian crises have either decreased or suspended their financial commitments to Northwest Syria due to the sole control of that area by the prescribed armed group HTS.

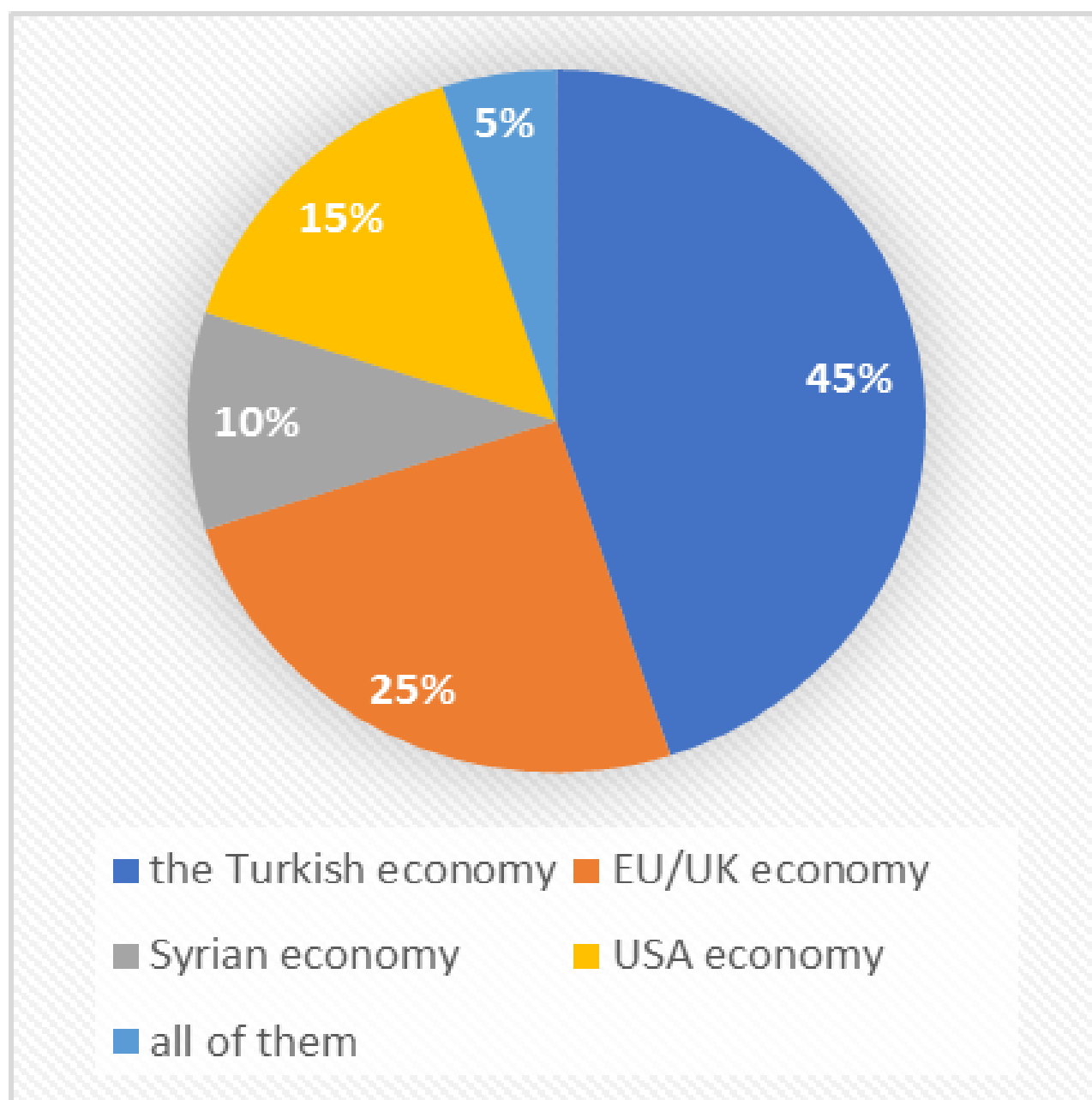
Figure 7: Global regulations affecting SNGOs



Those counter-terrorism regulations have affected the NGOs responding in that area through decreased funds and unclear banking systems that created so many barriers on NGOs (Daher, 2020). Those banking systems' difficulties with transferring essential project funds to Turkey to ensure the continuation of the humanitarian interventions have either caused a delay for transactions, closure of bank accounts, additional

losses due to changed exchange rates, or even financial transfer suspension is withholding the money in some cases.

Figure 8: Most affecting countries' economic stability on SNGOs



Secondly, as shown in figure 7, almost half of the responders thought that the Turkish economic stability affected the SNGOs working from Turkey; in contrast, some weighted the EU/UK and USA economic stability. The Turkish economic issues, such as the devaluation of the Turkish Lira, which inflated the Turkish market, have increased project and operational costs on the SNGOs. It is worth knowing that the Northwest of Syria is heavily relying on the Turkish market to provide essential daily commodities; thus, the instability of the Turkish economy has also impacted the market there. The devaluation of the Turkish Lira has also resulted in additional regulations from the Turkish government to limit financial transactions' currency to be only in Turkish Lira preventing contracting and transferring to be made in USD or Euros. This regulation has created additional losses for NGOs as their contracts in the Northwest of Syria are made in

USD while the funds received are made by the donors' currencies, e.g., USD, GBP or Euros. Thus, the Syrian NGOs have to do several currencies exchanges from the moment they receive the funds until the distribution of assistance to vulnerable families. However, according to the questionnaire responders, the impact of the EU/UK and USA economic instability was a decrease of institutional funds or prioritising other humanitarian crises over the Syrian one.

Thirdly, according to most of the responders, the functionality of the Turkish market and donors' compliance has encouraged Syrian NGOs to do most of their purchase activities from Turkey instead of Syria. This has led to two main impacts; first, the southern region of Turkey has witnessed inflation of prices because of demanding exportation to Syria; second, imported commodities to Northwest Syria has remarkably participated in both reviving economy and fighting monopoly made by some limited local sources.

Fourthly, although the severe devaluation of the Syrian Pound did not affect operations of Syrian NGOs, it has affected the economic situation of civilians in Syria generally and Northwest particularly (REACH, 2020). The impact was demonstrated by increasing more the number of vulnerable people that made 80% of the Syrian people below the poverty line, according to Lowcock (2020). This has forced civilians in Northwest of Syria to replace the Syrian Pound with the Turkish Lira in their local daily transactions to avoid additional harm caused by the devaluation of the Syrian Pound.

Sociocultural Challenges

Firstly, the massive displacements of civilians moving to Northwest Idlib from the beginning of the crises until today has made the area home for about 4 million individuals (UN OCHA, 2019). About 2.7 million of the inhabitants were displaced from their hometown, and around 850 thousand of them were displaced between December 2019 and March 2020 (UN OCHA, 2020 a). The social results vary from a community to another. In some areas, this has created tension between host communities and displaced people, while in others, communities have hosted the displaced families with hospitality and support (IMPACT, 2020). But for sure, these massive displacements have changed the demography of the areas in Northwest Syria. Some communities as Afrin, have changed from a majority of Kurds ethnicity to Arabs, while other communities have changed from a sectarian group to another (IMPACT, 2020). The impact of these displacements has increased the number of vulnerable families as newcomers came with only clothes on their bodies. Thus, they need essential assistance as well as additional community services such as education, health and water. This means additional pressure on SNGOs working from Turkey to respond to the needs of the displaced people and trying to create a balance with services provided to target host communities as well.

Secondly, the social impact of refugees in Turkey has not differed from that in North of Syria. Because millions of Syrian refugees received support from the Turkish government in Turkey a tension between both refugees and host communities has been created and led to the loss of elections for the Turkish government during 2019. This has forced the government to change its approach towards Syrians working in Turkey as well as Syrian NGOs.

As Syrian workers, the duration of working without legal documents has already passed a long time ago. Increasingly work permits are not provided smoothly as they were before. Additionally, Turkish authorities have made spot checks on Syrian refugees with no legal work or residence permits to be deported to North Syria (Leghtas, 2019). This procedure has forced Syrian NGOs and INGOs to replace Syrian staff, who used to work with them for years and have received so many capacity development activities, with fresh staff members with Turkish citizenship. Thirdly, the tension between Turkish host and Syrian refugees' communities has also forced the SNGOs to shift their operations from Northwest Syria to respond to refugees and their hosting communities in Turkey to mitigate the tension.

Lastly, the increased number of refugees in Europe has also affected SNGOs in Turkey as some European countries have shifted part of their funds, which used to be allocated to Syria, to be devoted to integration programmes for refugees in Europe and Turkey.

Technological Challenges

The cross-border regulations encouraged SNGOs as well as INGOs working from Turkey to use a remote management modality to rely on technology to cover gaps of direct monitoring and supervision. In addition, the increased compliance regulations of donors linked with the counter-terrorism laws and other regulations forced SNGOs to improve their systems and automate them as much as possible. Not all SNGOs have available financial and operational capacities to purchase those required software systems to automate their processes, such as accounting software, monitoring and data collection systems, supply chain application, human resource management and project management systems. Thus, those who own those capacities have improved their performance by decreasing time consuming and bureaucracy in implementing day-to-day tasks that facilitated their processes. As a result, those SNGOs have received additional funds as donors consider them more reliable to work with than other NGOs.

Additionally, investment of the Turkish authorities in the infrastructure of Northwest Syria, such as telecommunications and postal services, has remarkably supported SNGOs. The telecommunication system has provided a reliable internet and GSM connection for NGOs to continually communicate with their staff. At the same time, the postal service has allowed NGOs to use the wire transfer method to send funds needed to their field staff and suppliers.

Environmental Challenges

The environmental challenges were not reviewed within this research as they are out of the scope of the research objective and need a separate study to identify and assess.

Conclusion

Although the love of giving, supporting, and helping as a form of individuals then charities have been so important for those in need for centuries, their impact was originally limited to the provision of food parcels, the usage of the winterisation items and the heal through the medicines given. The role of NGOs then developed to provide long term sustainable impacts through the establishment of hospitals, schools, and infrastructure but without an ultimate goal. This goal is recently identified per each humanitarian NGO, recognised by their members, and shown externally through their set of programmes. Those goals are now the core motivators for the NGOs to continue their actions though there are sometimes that manoeuvring around the principles is witnessed due to the linkage between the funding, legal and political views of the governmental donors and the weaknesses of the NGOs in front of the funds and the continuity of the operations. This evolution method was also applicable to the Syrian context as NGOs developed with time from just providing aid to advocating on behalf of the vulnerable affected people. Syrian NGOs are now not just delivering agencies on behalf of their international counterparts; they are drawing the future of their country through close engagement and participation in the resolution discussions and meetings.

Sufficient and detailed information was given about the importance and use of the most popular external challenges assessment tool which is known as PEST analysis. The PEST questionnaire showed that Turkish latest elections, the relationships between Turkey vs USA and EU, and HTS control on Idlib and Western Aleppo were the most political change that affected SNGOs working from Turkey. While the additional regulations and laws on institutional funding, the economy in the USA and the devaluation of the Turkish Lira were the most economic change triggers that affected SNGOs. In addition to some other social triggers like the tension between the hosting community and the refugees, and some other technological triggers, e.g., the usage of the automated software for some operational activities.

It is recommended to follow up on this research by assessing the remaining challenge type from the PESTLE, which is the environmental challenge. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic is still fresh to be evaluated; however, some direct results have already started affecting SNGOs working from Turkey. They might be operational difficulties such as decreased productivity, coordination, and communication due to working from home, or programmatic such as additional load on NGOs' facilities and services due to an increasing number of vulnerable people. Thus, it is worth diving more deeply into this type of challenge to check how the pandemic and other environmental challenges have affected the operations of the Syrian NGOs working from Turkey.

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The Composition of Multiple Times and Spaces in the Protests

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

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This paper demonstrates how the interactions of diverse people with Taksim, Gezi Park, and one another, as well as with material practices and events constructed the Gezi protests' spaces and times. While the Gezi protests began as a reaction against the uprooting of trees in the park, the excessive use of the police force turned the protests into national unrest. Gezi Park and Taksim Square witnessed a 15-days occupation, which provided countless potentials for bodily actions in material spaces. By looking at the moment in which the protests occurred and exploring the embodied performance of politics in Gezi Park, this paper argues that the Gezi protests created their own times and spaces, in which bodies performed, acted and experienced a different kind of sociality. The paper calls attention to how the protests produced such unique spaces and how internal and external dynamics shaped these spaces. To explore such multiplicity and diversity of the moments, the concepts of "politics of encounter," "performativity" and "carnavalesque" will be deployed in separate sections. In using these concepts, this paper elucidates the different narratives of the protesters, captured in the moments and practices of the protests.

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Introduction

The last decade witnessed Occupy-style protests on the streets of Tunis, Cairo, Benghazi, Madrid, Athens, New York, Ferguson, Baltimore, London, Hong Kong, Seoul and many other cities around the world. Protests involving the occupation of spaces, actions and bodily performances that are produced by different identities are politically meaningful. There have been numerous studies on global protests which examined different dimensions of the protests within social studies. Some scholars specifically focused on the protest camp to explore encounter (Merrifield 2012, 2011, Halvorsen 2015a, 2015b), the meaning attached to the occupation of spaces (Calhoun, 2013), the reciprocities between public and virtual spaces (Gregory 2013), the ways in which the protests created new political subjectivities (Bethania 2017, Hassan 2012, Gambetti 2014) and the publicity of occupying (Murray 2016). This literature offers valuable insights to rethink the spaces of protests which can be uncertain, contingent and fluid. In this paper, I seek to expand upon these perspectives to demonstrate the multiplicity and diversity of the moments and spaces of protests. This paper, therefore, seeks to understand the multiple meanings attached to occupying public spaces as well as the claims that occupation of the public space is not merely a power of the act itself but also a powerful act. It demonstrates how the interactions of different people with Taksim and Gezi Park and with one another and with material practices and events constructed the Gezi protests' multiple spaces and times.

In order to better understand the multiplicity and diversity of the moment and its impact on the event, this paper perceives the spaces of the protest as relational. It applies Massey's (2005: 9) concept of "throwtogetherness" that is used to mark multiplicity, diversity and difference in cities: "the space in which distinct trajectories coexist; as the sphere therefore of coexisting heterogeneity." Space is a dynamic network of conflicting power relations: it is a social product. Space cannot be treated as "the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile" (Foucault, 1980: 70), but instead as "socially produced". Lefebvre (1991: 91) states that "space is social morphology: it is to lived experience what form itself is to the living organism, and just as intimately bound up with function and structure." Likewise, Massey argues that space is not a "surface" or a "continuous material landscape." Space is "a momentary coexistence of trajectories, a configuration of a multiplicity of histories all in the process of being made." (Massey, 2000: 209). Massey's, Lefebvre's, and Foucault's definitions of space are intrinsically relational, heterogeneous and processual. This relational thinking of the place enables us to think about the ways in which diverse actors and processes constructed Gezi's multiple spaces and times.

In summer 2013, Turkey witnessed significant events after a protest against the government's plan to demolish Gezi Park, Taksim, located at the heart of Istanbul. The protests began as an environmental concern against the government's Gezi Park project, aiming to construct a shopping mall on the Gezi Park, and thus many activists went to the park to protect the trees from uprooting on 27 May 2013. Although only a few protesters stood up against the bulldozers, the police's response was excessively punitive, leading to the gradual expansion of the protest. Also, the harsh response of the then Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, inflamed the situation, and the mobilisation soon after turned into a nationwide anti-government uprising. During the 15-days occupation of the Gezi Park and Taksim Square, massive scale protests continued in other parts of Istanbul and across the country.

Demonstrations and protests in an urban park brought together a whole body of different interest groups: leftists, nationalists, Kemalists, LGBT people, football fans, Alawites, Kurdish activists, Anticapitalist Muslims, artists, celebrities and more. The diverse groups and individuals coalesced around varying concerns related to the policies of the ruling Justice and Development Party (JDP), which had been in power for more than a decade by then, and its leader—Recep Tayyip Erdogan. For fifteen days, as the busiest thoroughfare of Istanbul, Taksim Square and Gezi Park witnessed the coexistence of difference, thus providing countless potentials for bodily actions in material space.

By looking at the moment in which the protests occurred and exploring the embodied performance of politics in Gezi Park, this paper argues that the Gezi protests created their own time and space, in which bodies performed, acted and experienced a different kind of sociality which can be seen as "articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings" (Massey, 1993: 66). The paper calls attention to the way in which protests produced such a unique space and how internal and external dynamics shaped this space. To explore such diversity of the moments, the concepts of "politics of encounter," "performativity", and "carnavalesque" will be deployed. While each concept refers to different practices, these overlapped with each other. Politics of encounter' is used to emphasise the forms of new social relations in the park. Judith Butler's concept of "performativity" will be used to stress the political significance of bodily actions, even if there was not a single "real" goal sought by protesters. Bakhtin's carnivalesque concept offers an explanation for how prevalent norms and social positions can be challenged through irony, humour, and parody. In using these concepts, this paper seeks to elucidate the different narratives of the protesters, captured in the moments and practices of the protests. The paper also questions the limitations of the moment(s) in which the protests occurred. Although the paper calls attention to diverse and multiple moment(s) of protests, it argues that the moment(s) could not produce a transformative effect in the broader public.

The empirical materials used in this article come from several sources. It is mostly based on 29 in-depth interviews¹ conducted with the disparate groups and individuals who participated in the protests between March and September 2014. Media review is an important source also used in this paper. Several newspaper articles from different newspapers, such as *Cumhuriyet*, *Sozcu*, *Hurriyet*, *HaberTurk* and *Sabah*, were analysed, covering the period between 27 May 2013 and 27 May 2014. Conducting interviews, a year later after the protests allowed tracing the participants' changing ideas about the protest's long-term achievements

¹ In this paper, the names of participants were anonymised and ethical approval had been obtained by Durham University.

that were reflected towards the end of the article. Thus, this article considers the potentialities of occupying physical spaces and also the limitations of this act.

Encountering in the Gezi protests

After the police's withdrawal on the 1st of June 2013, an unusual multitude of people remained in Taksim and Gezi Park. On the one hand, thousands of people marched and walked through Istiklal, a pedestrian street between Taksim Square and the Tunnel, which is one of the most crowded streets of Istanbul, chanting "We are the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal". On the other hand, pro-Kurdish activists joined the protests. Moreover, three football clubs' fans, Fenerbahce, Besiktas and Galatasaray, known as homophobic and sexist, participated in the protests alongside LGBT groups, Anticapitalist Muslims, women's unions, trade unions, political parties, many individuals from various backgrounds. There were also many celebrities, artists, actresses, and more importantly, the capitalist class from big businesses expressed their sympathy with the protests through social media and in the following days joined the protests in the park. This unusual assemblage eventually shared the same space for two weeks that created new forms of political expression in the Gezi protests.

In fact, in cities like Istanbul, there has always been diversity, and such diversity comes together from time to time in different ways. Taksim has long been a space for protest. In particular, during 2011 and 2012, multiple political groups participated in the 1st May rallies. Yet, it was the first time in Turkish history that multiple groups spent 15 days together in the same public space. Therefore, it is useful to apply the concept of "encounter" to explain 'contact' between different identities during the protests. It is here argued that encounters between multiple political, cultural and social identities in the unique space of the Taksim protest created a difference. This encounter generated affinity and solidarity, but at the same time, it revealed that deep historical prejudices could not be dissolved in such a short period of time.

Encounter is often used to describe practices of bringing different bodies together in unexpected ways. Wilson (2016) demonstrates that encounters allow the ways in which we think about bodies, borders and differences to develop. Encounters enable a "focus on the embodied nature of social distinctions and the unpredictable ways in which similarity and difference are negotiated at the moment." (Wilson, 2016: 5). Thus, for her, the encounter is not merely bringing different bodies together, but more importantly, encounters generate a difference. She asserts that "words such as "rupture", "surprise", "shock" and "animation" are common to descriptions of encounter and describe a moment or instance in which something is unexpectedly broken open." (2016: 6). Moreover, Valentine (2008) claims that history, material conditions, and power have a significant impact on encounters, and thus they should not be romanticised. In her work on white majority attitudes towards minority groups in London, she concluded that encounters should not always be understood using the lens of new urban citizenship and cosmopolitanism as social prejudices create gaps between the scales of encounters. Therefore, spaces of encounters are often ambiguous and incorporate antagonistic practices.

Merrifield (2012; 2011; 2014) and Halvorsen (2015a) explore encounters in the context of urban protests. Drawing on Lefebvre's urban writing Merrifield believes that the current protests, which involve offline and online participation, can be understood through a politics of encounter. He does not take the question of how/when to make a successful encounter as the main point. Rather, he argues encounters are unpredictable and every encounter produces subjectivities. "Affinity becomes the cement that bonds, perhaps only for a moment, but a moment that lingers, a lasting encounter, of people across frontiers and barriers." (2011: 109). What becomes important in such protests is that encounters are staged in the heart of the city as well as through Facebook and Twitter. While virtual spaces provided new spaces for assembling and contestation (Murray, 2016), thanks to brave people who showed their presence in physical spaces public spaces were reconstructed (Gregory, 2013). Thus, these city spaces are not concrete physical spaces; instead, they are public spaces which "enable public discourses, public conversations to talk and meet each other, quite literally." (Merrifield, 2013: 919).

Gezi Park provided an open space of encounter in a way that empowered new social relationships between different bodies. People were flung together in Taksim that brought unpredictable consequences. Not only the event but also the history of Taksim as a cosmopolitan place enabled encounters of different subjectivities. For many of the interviewees participating in Gezi was one of the most remarkable experiences

in their lives, even although some of them had participated in many other protests. During this time, the catchphrase “Gezi spirit” was widely used in social media and in the park to express how the social divisions were blurred. Accordingly, the Gezi spirit named an affinity between different bodies and subjects that had previously felt it was impossible to come together. Such a spirit challenged identity positions between organised groups and those who do not have a party affiliation, between LGBT groups and football fans, between the Anticapitalist Muslims and secular Turks, and between the nationalist Turkish and Kurdish groups. For example, Buket, one of the interviewees, asserted that the atmosphere during the first days of occupation resembled the atmosphere in a football stadium because of all the swearing. Yet, thanks to women and LGBT activists who set up “Swearword Workshops” in the park, awareness about sexism grew, and as a result, the use of sexist and homophobic language was reduced. In this sense, attitudes and positions with regard to “others” evolved through an encounter.

An Anticapitalist Muslim, Kenan believes that encountering different classes was one of the most remarkable achievements of the protests.

The biggest gain is that people from different parts of the society came together for the same goal. This was something that could not be achieved for a long time. The feasibility of this was implemented there. An amazing brotherhood was established there, and a sharing environment was established there... These are the things that I will never forget. For 17-18 days of the period a space that is like a ‘rehearsal heaven’ was constructed, and everyone was watching each other’s needs.... (Kenan, April 8, 2013, Findikzade)

Kenan’s position is embodied in religious discourse. He carefully selected religious words to emphasise the affinity between people. As Merrifield (2013) indicates, affinity brings a new dimension to the crowds made up of people from different ages and groups who assemble and encounter each other. Gezi established horizontal relationships despite vertical differences in terms of social, cultural and economic between different individuals and groups. They all shared a common sense of frustration and anger. Merrifield (2011 114) states,

“For the politics of the encounter will always be an encounter somewhere, a spatial meeting place. It will always be an illicit rendezvous of human bonding and solidarity, a virtual, emotional and material topography in which something disrupts and intervenes in the paralysis.”

During the occupation, Kurdish groups with signs of Kurdish activism and Turkish nationalist groups with Turkish and Atatürk flags coexisted in the same space. Such coexistence provoked amazed comments from the protesters. In particular, many protesters found a picture capturing three citizens who stood against the police force together - one citizen holding the Turkish flag, and another citizen holding the PKK flag and the other citizen making the sign of nationalist movement- incredibly evocative and impressive. Ahmet, a middle-aged activist, believes that thanks to the Gezi spirit everyone embraced each other, creating solidarity. As a Kurdish citizen who has been campaigning for Kurdish rights for years, he thinks that Gezi brought the Kurdish problem into view and more people became aware of it.

People wanted to solve a problem instead of protesting about something. It was not just a protest. It was a stance against this practice [cutting the trees]. A lot of things have been gained, a history has been made, a culture has been created, and a sense of brotherhood has been created. Can you believe that in Kadikoy and Besiktas the protests were organised against the construction of a police station in Lice [a Kurdish district in Southeast Anatolia]? You know, these two districts are known for their Kemalist identity, but as a result of Gezi spirit, they said ‘resist Lice’ and perceived Medeni Yildirim [who was killed by a soldier during the clash in Lice after Gezi protests] as a martyr of Gezi... (Ahmet, May 5, 2014, Tarlabasi).

Gezi enabled the crossing of boundaries between different socio-cultural classes. Ahmet believes that this overcoming of power relations was inspired by empathy. While for some people encountering Kurdish activists in the park generated empathy, the ultra-Turkish nationalist groups, on the other hand, were less supportive. Many activists were disappointed by the reactions of ultra-nationalists towards the Kurdish groups. A leftist journalist who was one of the initial activists in the park told me that although the only thing

that Kurdish groups were doing in the park was performing a folk dance (known as *halay cekmek*) for 24 hours, they were targeted by the ultra-nationalists. Mahir, a law student, said that taking part in Gezi was an amazing experience. He articulated that in the park the only thing that mattered was brotherhood and egalitarianism. However, Mahir indicated that it was impossible for him to come together in solidarity with someone who holds a Kurdish flag. That was the reason why he put a distance between himself and the Kurdish groups in the park. In Mahir's case, encountering others with different political identities did not produce new social relations.

Of course, there were some disagreements, conflicting ideas, but we had to get united and in solidarity. Some provocative groups [Kurdish activists] tried to divide the mass and carried out the terrorist activities, but our people were never provoked. This was about who was leading the movement. The majority of people who were respectful about Mustafa Kemal [the founder of the Turkish Republic] and never gave up holding Turkish flags didn't allow these provocative groups in the park. The crowds weren't divided and didn't leave the park because of Abdullah Ocalan's flags. They persisted with their Turkish flags. They insisted on being respectful towards Mustafa Kemal. And these groups remained the minority in the park. The system drove them to the park, but the people took them out. (Mahir, June 6, 2014, Taksim).

Valentine (2008) observes how interaction with different political interests might engender resentment. As she indicates, attitudes and values towards different identities can remain unchanged and even toughen through encounters which was the case for some of the groups in the park. Therefore, although from the outside, it seemed as though the bodies that were resisting power united were united, there were still divisions out on the ground.

Consequently, although encounters in the park created a difference, this difference did not have the same impact on all groups and identities. For example, while the Anticapitalist Muslims performed their prayers, the leftists made a protective ring around them in case of police intervention. In contrast to this moment of solidarity between Anticapitalist Muslims and the leftist groups, there was antipathy between the pro-Kurdish groups and nationalist Kemalists. This also raises questions around the nature of encounters with people who were not supportive of the protests, or the shopkeepers in Taksim area. There was a different relationship with the Gezi spirit inside and outside of the park. The protests did not produce close proximity with those who did not support the protest. On the contrary it created more aggressiveness. Yayla (2013) and Yel and Nas (2013) claimed that the protesters harassed women with the headscarves deemed to be supporters of the government. They were regarded as responsible for the policies of the JDP and subjected to both verbal and psychological pressure in many places throughout the protests. Moreover, the protesters smashed the display windows of many shops including bank branches which of them were thought to have a close relationship with the government (Hurriyet, 2 June 2013; Sabah, 3 June 2014.). Thus, there was a different relationship with the Gezi spirit inside and outside of the park.

Performing bodily actions in the park

On 28th May when bulldozers entered the park to cut down the trees, some activists kept guard in order to protect the trees but were forcibly removed and this continued until 1st June when the police left the park. Later, people continued to set up tents and established a community in the park. That said, from 28th May until the 1st of June the protesters performed different bodily actions according to the situations that they faced. Thus, during this period of time the bodies assembled and acted together to show their presence in Taksim. Using Judith Butler's concept of performativity to show how bodies acted together, this section explains the political acts behind the protests.

Butler (2011) examines bodily actions in mass demonstration through the concept of performativity. She seeks to understand how our identities are performed, initially using this concept to understand the ways in which gender is constructed through iterative performances. Performativity is not "the act by which a subject brings into being what she/he names, but, rather... [the] reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains." (Butler, 1993: 2). In the same way, Butler argues that when bodies congregate in public spaces, they construct a collective political body that moves, speaks, and makes claims together. Bodies do not act alone; instead they act together as political subjects. It is bodily actions

that formed a new space in which political actions occurred. Following Butler's claim, I maintain that it was the collective actions of bodies in solidarity in Taksim and Gezi that created a new space.

Initially, only a handful of protesters occupied Gezi to prevent its transformation. The police had dispersed previous protests in Taksim such as 1st May rally and the protest against the demolition of Emek Cinema, but their actions created the opposite effect on 28th May 2013. As long as the police used excessive force, including burning the tents of protesters in the early morning, the bodies insisted on defending the trees. Moreover, every time the police intervened; more people went to the park. Burcak, a mechanical engineer who was one of the first activists, thinks that not only excessive police force but also the process itself enabled the protest to develop.

On May 28, when we first went to the park, the bulldozers already stopped, and there were not more than 50 people in the morning. Since we knew the bulldozers would cut the trees, we occupied there to stop them. The police came later on, and the municipal police officers were there, too... With the operation of the bulldozers, we were faced with the attack of police and municipal police officers this time when we tried to stop or interrupt the bulldozers to cut the trees. After a while, we were attacked, pushed and squeezed in ways that you might have already seen from those first images... As a matter of fact, as the hours passed, people began to assemble there, we were 50 then we became 100; we were 100 then we became 1000... It went like that (Burcak, May 20, 2014, Taksim).

The protesters' persistence gained a particular meaning. Butler defines bodies that assemble on the street as precarious, obdurate and insisting on their collective identities in a particular space. She maintains that bodies not only appear and act, they also refuse and persist "under conditions in which that fact alone is taken to be an act of delegitimation of the state. It is not that bodies are simply mute life-forces that counter existing modalities of power. Rather, they are themselves patterns of power, embodied interpretations, engaging in allied action" (2011: np). People in Gezi Park and Taksim refused to leave the park. Protecting a few trees might seem a naïve response, yet exercising a right to protect the trees and insisting on this right by staying in place gained meaning. Bodies mobilised in the space, they occupied the space, and they constructed a new space through bodily actions between them, thanks to this persistence.

After the initial occupation, the park was turned into a living space by the protesters. They established a communal life, spontaneously constructing a café, an infirmary, a kitchen, warehouse, garden, library, mosque, memorial area and other utilities. They called their garden "Gezi Garden", the square "Democracy Square", the market "Revolution Market" and the library "*Capulcu* Library"². The space that they constructed dismissed the traditional distinction between public and private. Using Butler's rhetoric, it can be said that a 'new form of sociability' was established in the rescued space. As Butler maintains, the ways in which bodies performed on the streets cross boundaries between public and private, and eating and sleeping became actions done in the public domain. That helped to form horizontal relationships between bodies that broke gender, class and race relations and spoke in the name of equality.

Bodies not only performed private bodily actions in the park but also, they had new experiences and strategies through living in the space. They divided the park into cantons and each group set up their tents in different cantons. According to the interviewees, radical leftist groups with their flags were located in Taksim Square, and diverse groups and individuals with no party sign or flags were concentrated in different parts of the park. For example, anarchists and socialists mainly stood at the edge of the park, whereas those who were not affiliated with particular parties preferred to locate themselves deeper inside the park. One of the interviewees, a member of a left-wing party, smilingly declared that they, as socialists, were like 'bastions' that protected people from any interventions by law enforcement officers. This also reveals that there were some significant bodily differences in the wider body politic of the protest group. Protesters also constructed barricades from public and private vehicles, stones, wooden crates and seats, not only on the boundaries of Gezi Park but also on all the streets towards Besiktas, Osmanbey and Istiklal in order to restrict access to the Taksim area. They used strategies such as running, hiding and escaping from the police and a variety of solutions to diminish the effect of teargas. In this way, they were aware of the power that surrounded them and learned the ways to resist and oppose it.

² *Capulcu* means looter that I will address this word in the next section more broadly.

The occupation of Gezi also enabled multiple bodies to become visible in the public domain. Different bodies had different demands, but they all became public in the material space that was supposed to be turned into a private shopping mall. In so doing, the material spaces of Taksim and Gezi became part of, and supported the action of, the broader protest body. Thanks to the protests, the park was saved. However, the park revealed that bodies could act in solidarity regardless of the political differences they had. Ugur believes that Gezi changed his perspective in terms of being political.

We won the GP. For example, it is a much better park than it was before. We also have gained something else, that is, we have made the government step back, and we saw that such a thing could happen. It expanded our horizons in this sense. We saw millions of people on the streets. This was an incredible experience that would not come true even if we wanted. No matter what, we wanted it also for 1st May rally and we will try it again on 28th [May- the first anniversary of Gezi protest]. I think this is not something that can happen with our desire, but something that spontaneously happens. We saw ordinary citizens or our neighbours on the streets, too. Usually, we don't consider them activists or political figures. This is broadening our horizon from this perspective. Indeed, everyone is a political figure, everyone has some demands, and everyone has something to tell. We saw in Gezi that if possibilities are given, this can happen. (Ugur, May 8, 2014, Osmanbey).

Ugur attributed new dimensions to the right to protest. As an activist, he realised that anybody could have a political claim about the right to the city. Butler argues that street assemblies cannot be reduced into a singularity. What becomes important when bodies assemble on the streets is, as Butler stresses, that they assert their presence “as a plural and obdurate bodily life” in the public domain. “The “we are here” that translates that collective bodily presence might be re-read as “we are still here,” meaning: “We have not yet been disposed of... We have not slipped quietly into the shadows of public life; we have not become the glaring absence that structures your public life” (Puar, 2012: 193). Consequently, Gezi witnessed multiple bodily actions that widened our perspective about the relationship between public and private and also about being political subjects.

Carnavalesque in the park

During the occupation of Gezi Park, a new political space was created by the protesters. These fifteen days of occupation enabled a break from the state's order. While constructing a communal life was a way to subvert the rules of authority, at the same time, a mixture of laughter and humorous performances also enabled the protesters to challenge existing forms of authority. In this section, by using Bakhtin's concept of carnivalesque, I will show how life in Gezi was turned upside down in the demonstrations. To do that, I argue that *capulcus* and their performances should be understood through a carnivalesque lens and these carnivalesque practices can be identified as a joyful subversion of the state's power.

Carnavalesque is a concept that was employed by the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin in his book, *Rabelais and his World*, to refer to subversive acts at carnivals that are practised by people in order to reverse hierarchies and abandon conventions. For Bakhtin, (1984: 10) a carnival is “peculiar folk humour that always existed and has never merged with the official culture of the ruling classes.” Examining carnivals of the late medieval and early modern period, Bakhtin looks at their philosophical meaning and argues that people change their everyday lives into a utopia during such time-spaces. Carnival goers wear costumes that enable them to suspend their social class and gender identities. Males can wear female costumes just as women can wear male costumes. For Bakhtin, the carnival is not only about physical space, but it also enables people to do what they want to do, which they cannot do in their existing social world. He claims that carnival “builds its own world versus the official world, its own church versus the official church, its own state versus the official state.” (Bakhtin, 1984: 27)

Following Bakhtin's concept, it can be said that Gezi turned into a carnival. The way participants performed and reacted against authority signified a critical politics of fun.

Perhaps like Erdogan said we, all the *capulcus* were there. (Buket, May 22, 2014, Findikzade)

Capulcu is a label that was used by Erdogan to refer to the protesters as a few looters (*capulcu*) in a TV programme on 2nd June 2013. While he used this term to humiliate the protesters in the park, everyone in the park joyfully embraced this label and started to describe themselves as *capulcu*. Thus, *Capulcu* as a bonding term for all people in the park was no longer an insulting word, but rather gained a meaning of resistance against state authority. The carnivalesque figure of *capulcu* suspended all differences between people (Bakhtin, 1984). It extinguished the hierarchies of status through the discourse of equality between all people. As Bakhtin (1984: 7) maintains:

“Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it. During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom. It has a universal spirit; it is a special condition of the entire world, of the world’s revival and renewal, in which all take part. Such is the essence of carnival, vividly felt by all its participants.”

As a bonding term, *capulcu* started to circulate nationally and internationally. Not only those in the park but also many others – celebrities, intellectuals, and politicians - labelled themselves as *capulcu*. The CEO of Boyner Holding, one of the big corporations in Turkey, tweeted “I am neither leftist nor rightist, I am only a *capulcu*” to show his political support. Similarly, Noam Chomsky recorded a video message with a banner stating “I am also a *Capulcu*. In solidarity, resist Istanbul”. By this way, the protests enabled to transcend of the vertical boundaries of class and gave a new and different meaning to space. Hence, we can see how the Gezi carnivalesque extended beyond the physical confines of the park and the square

By joyfully embracing the term *capulcu*, the protesters transformed the protests into a carnival defined by irony, satire, parody and grotesque. A robust sense of humour was found in graffiti, banners, slogans, chanting, dance and music. Graffiti that was painted on one of the buildings in Taksim read that “Every day I’m *chapulling*”, inspired by the famous rock group LMFAO’s hit, “Party Rock Anthem”. Through theatrical performances, Taksim was turned into a space of “everyday *capulling* [the verb form of *capulcu*]”, which is now addressed in more detail.

Capulcus and their carnivalesque practices

Capulcus re-appropriated and re-produced many things through performing in the space. They applied humour, creativity, and joviality in their songs, dances, graffiti, slogans, and chanting that turned the protests into a carnivalesque event. In this way, they produced new icons and memes associated with Gezi. The main theme was to call attention to the use of tear gas and to show the achievements of the protest. Bakhtin (1984: 8) believes that “carnival is the people’s second life, organised on the basis of laughter. It is a festive life. Festivity is a peculiar quality of all comic rituals and spectacles.” Gezi became an event of laughing in the face of authority.

On May 31st and over the following days, all chanting and graffiti were directed towards Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the anger expressed toward his personality. First and foremost, his name was used without a title or his surname, which is considered disrespectful in Turkish culture. Although walls and banners were covered with swear words about Erdogan, many banners and graffiti also used creativity and humour to criticise Erdogan. For example, to point out that state authority was performed by the police, they spelt his name “Recop Tazyik Gazdogan” (truncheon, coercion and gas). Likewise, the famous meme of Game of Thrones was replicated in English as “Tayyip, winter is coming” to show Erdogan’s time is about to finish for the protestors. Also, another exciting example was Nokia’s famous tagline “connecting people”, which was re-produced using Erdogan’s name as “Tayyip connecting people” was used to emphasise the unity and diversity of protesters thanks to Erdogan. Slogans using humour and creativity were often more effective in grabbing attention.

One of the most remarkable icons of the protests involved penguins. On May 31st 2013 when there was excessive use of police force against the protesters, one of the mainstream channels, CNN Turk, owned by the opposition group Dogan Media, showed a documentary about penguins instead of reporting the news. Penguins were no longer limited to the documentary. Indeed, in graffiti and banners they gained new meaning as a representation of censorship. Indeed, the name of the episode, “Spy in the Huddle” that was

chosen by CNN Turk could be caricatured easily in graffiti. This icon was widely displayed to ridicule and criticise the state authority.

Throughout the protest, music, singing and dancing were important performances in the park. Not only did the protesters create new songs, but they also performed modern and traditional dances containing new meanings linked to the protests. The famous Turkish rock group Duman's "bring it on!" (Hurriyet, 3 June 2013) Bogazici Jazz Choir's "are you a *capulcu*, wow!" (Hurriyet, 6 June 2013) and a Turkish folklore band's "the mood of pot and pan" (Hurriyet, 6 June 2013) were inspired by and dedicated to the protests. Another interesting example was the portrayal of the "whirling dervish". The whirling dervish is a dance that is practised by the Mevlevi order³. The dance is one of the spiritual treasures of the Mevlevi tradition. More importantly, the practice itself is a peaceful and spiritual exercise that expresses the closeness of the relationship between God and the human being. The powerful message behind such a performance is "you, too, come" (*sen de gel*), a stencil referring to a phrase attributed to the saint Rumi, which was written as follows:

Come, come, whoever you are,
Wanderer, worshiper, lover of leaving.
It doesn't matter.
Ours is not a caravan of despair.
Come, even if you have broken your vows a thousand times.
Come, yet again, come, come. (Mawlânâ Jalâluddîn Rûmî)

This dance was reinterpreted in Gezi Park. A dancer in a dervish costume with a gas mask on his face performed this spiritual dance in the park. Sometimes he was half-naked with black leggings and a pink skirt and sometimes in a green costume. The gas mask attributed an eclectic meaning to the whirling dervish: not only were these peaceful dervishes rebelling, but they also emphasise that Gezi was a peaceful protest. Transferring such a spectacle that is usually performed and/or seen by religious people to the park also showed the plurality and heterogeneity of protest: "you, too, come".

"Guy Fawkes" masks were widely used in Gezi Park. The sharp, triangular, subtly smiley masks have been widely used in global protests. The Guy Fawkes mask first appeared in a "V for Vendetta" comic published in 1982 in which an anarchist who wears a Guy Fawkes mask attempts to overthrow a fascist government and its collaborator, the media. "V for Vendetta" and the famous mask figure has gained worldwide popularity thanks to a Hollywood-made film, "V for Vendetta", that was released in 2005. Since then, the masks have become a symbol of opposition all over the world. Riisgaard & Thomassen (2016: 12) assert that the Guy Fawkes mask is used to contest power as "the mask calls out a source of authority hidden behind the protective veil of empty, abstract principles and black suits and tie." The mask references the historical rebellion against the English government by Guy Fawkes and hides the identities of people from state surveillance. From this perspective, mask-wearing in a collective protest has a symbolic meaning that challenges not only official forms of power but also emphasises multiple identities behind the mask. However, in contrast to other protests, protesters were holding the Turkish flag or the pictures of Ataturk while wearing masks. While the Turkish flags or Ataturk pictures symbolised the secular Turkish state, the mask itself was a global production of anonymity. Thus, this stance was not only against the authorities but also against the particular authority that was thought to destroy the secular principles of the modern Turkish state. Wearing the Guy Fawkes mask while waving Turkish flags or Ataturk's picture is, therefore, not a "closure but an opening, what it opens is not a predefined substance but the very realm of the sayable, made possible through an inner projection of the seeable, thrown onto the world stage of politics-in-the-making." (Riisgaard & Thomassen, 2016: 20). It was underpinned by the support of Anonymous, a network of hackers and Redhack, a Turkish hacking group. At the start of the protests, Anonymous launched attacks on the Turkish government and hacked the websites of authorities (Hurriyet, 3 June 2013).

All these examples suggest that through theatrical expressions, the *capulcus* created their own world in which they inverted hierarchies and reversed binaries. Ultimately, such an experience allowed "subjects to

³ The Mevlevi order is a traditional Sufi order that was based on the spiritual wisdom of Mawlânâ Jalâluddîn Rûmî, a Muslim saint who lived in the 13th century in Konya, Anatolia.

enter a liminal realms of freedom and in so doing create[d] a space for critique that would otherwise not be possible in “normal” society.” (Bruner, 2005: 140).

Chatterton (2006: 273) argues that although protests facilitate critical engagement with problems, they are mostly ephemeral “contact points and border crossings between different ethics and values... [and, thus] they are far from ideal.” The same can be said for Gezi. The Gezi protests created their own times and spaces, bringing together those who thought it impossible to bond and widening our perspectives about publics and publicness. Yet, it was hard to maintain such impacts for a longer time. Thus, the following section aims at revealing whether the protests could bring abrupt changes or not.

Moment or momentous?

For those who spent a day there, Gezi was an immense experience that seemed and felt like a dream. It seemed that not only were the protesters making history, but it was also a turning point in Turkish history. How could ultra-Turkish nationalist groups possibly come together with Kurdish nationalists or religious people with secular people or the capitalist class with socialists and communists? How could all the problems of ninety years be forgotten in a limited time? Here, the ‘Gezi spirit’ was perceived as a saviour that solved all the problems that Turkey had been facing. Protesters ate food that was brought by those they did not know. They did unite against Erdogan’s regime and showed what solidarity and encounter could look like if any chances were given. Then the question arises; “Did Gezi bring abrupt changes in Turkish public?”

Unlike social movements, which involve longer-term collective mobilisation, occupy-style movements occur for a short-term when public spaces are seized. Della Porta (2018) argues that some of the eventful protests have the potential to bring abrupt changes which occur contingently. Through evaluating a series of processes during the protests, Della Porta claims that global protests have a transformative effect, as they constitute norms, solidarity, and networks that provide resources and constraints for social movements. Beissinger (2007: 14) also asserts that protests are indeed “contentious and potentially subversive practices that challenge normalised practices, modes of causation, or system of authority.” On the contrary, analysing Occupy movements, Calhoun (2013) emphasises, the impacts of the movements are felt in cultural terms rather than as a permanent change in politics but yet each mobilisation not only speaks for the future but can also have an impact on existing relationships.

The Gezi protests brought together those who once thought it impossible to associate and thus allowed encounter and solidarity in offline and online spaces. Such encounters and solidarity have found in public forums and earth tables organised by the protesters after the massive protests. Although this sequence of activities enabled the protesters to expand their protests into everyday practices, their impacts faded away as time passed (Akay 2017). Oznur, an LGBT member, thinks such solidarity could not continue outside of the park and outside of the period of the Gezi protests. She perceives the time of Gezi as an impossible dream. It was the first time she encountered the Anticapitalist Muslims group. Yet, she concluded that the affinity in the park was only temporary. Likewise, Tarik, an oral history expert, truly believes in the spirit of Gezi. For him, Gezi achieved the impossible regarding overcoming differences. Even though he was incredibly excited to tell me how the Kurdish and Turkish nationalist groups came together, when I asked him what could have been different in the park, he disappointedly told me that problems did not really surface in the park.

Tarik: ‘I think almost everything was what it had to be, but there could be some more negative things. I wish there were. I wish they didn’t understand each other. I mean, it would be easier to understand each other if there were some more problems. They came and they sat on a table as if nothing had happened.

Me: who?

Tarik: As we just talked now, the Turkish nationalists and the radical Kurds. It seemed like nothing had happened before, they sat down and they performed the folk dance together. It shouldn’t be like that. They had to sit down and talk about their problems a bit harder. They talked but I think they had to discuss more in-depth...’ (Tarik, June 21, 2014, Galata)

Tarik suggests in-depth discussions were not held in Gezi. The commonality between the groups was limited to the fight against the JDP. Thus, there was an artificial togetherness between some groups. As Chatterton (2006) points out, unknowable and unrealistic aims cannot be achieved in moments of protest. “Desiring

them the whole scale often leads to frustrations. Victories come through subtle, slow changes. This is why a tense encounter or an angry conversation contains hope and has transformative power.” (Chatterton, 2006: 271). Since substantial discussions were not held between different groups, the “Gezi spirit” arguably remains no more than a populist claim that only lasted a brief moment.

While internal power relationships hindered the oppositional to coalesce around concrete political demands, external power relations shaped the direction of Gezi protests. Many people believed that there were two eras: before and after Gezi. While the former refers to politics based on old politics, the latter created a new pluralist political language. For example, Gole (2013: 14) claimed that the Gezi protests heralded, “the need for a new public culture based on recognition and acceptance.” However, the opposite has occurred and, in many ways, Gezi has exacerbated political instability. That said the post-Gezi protest environment was quite different from before, hindering the Gezi protests’ potentials to bring fundamental changes in the political domain. Walking alongside Koray, an architect and politician, through Istiklal Street, stroke me to think why the protests should be understood only through its times and spaces. Koray said that before the Gezi protests, they could easily organise small protests in Taksim without any police intervention but walking as a small group seemed suspicious for the police after the protests. Thus, the police would not hesitate to use power against them.

On the one hand, some of the protesters affiliated with radical political parties or groups sought to revive the protests repeatedly, and they called on the people to go to Taksim to protest every Saturday (see also Taksim Solidarity, 2013). On the other hand, the security forces exercised zero-tolerance for the right to protest. As the state did not allow any demonstrations in the area, Taksim became the most protected space in Turkey. The area around the Taksim Ataturk monument and Gezi Park were closed to public protests ever since to protect the public from the public, and police vehicles and undercover police officers were constantly present around Taksim and Gezi Park. Taksim became a battleground between the government and Gezi activism. Thus, it resembled a highly protected official site rather than a public space open to everyone.

Mona Abaza (2016), five years after the revolution in Egypt, questions what remains of the carnivalesque moments of Tahrir Square in 2011. She points out that although in the upheaval, the fearless citizens resisted the authoritarian state; it appears that the Arab spring has given rise to both militarism and terrorism. Similarly, while carnivalesque like protests revealed the uniqueness of Gezi, the aftermath of the massive protests did not meet the protesters’ goals. Although it might seem contrary to the multiple aims and ideals of the Gezi protests, the pluralist public sphere has been diminished, and the authoritarian drift of government has significantly increased (Akay 2017).

Conclusion

This paper claimed that Gezi created its times and spaces through temporary and happenstance constellations of differences. Using Gezi protests as a case study, it sought to comprehend how spaces and times of protests are created. The paper referred to the “politics of encounter”, “performativity” and “carnivalesque” concepts to signify the diversity and multiplicity of Gezi’s times and spaces. Such understanding allowed me to articulate the potentialities as well as the limits of what protests might bring in. The paper demonstrated how the Gezi protests brought something new, such as a multitude of different ideologies and political groups which found common ground. This multiplicity hinged on physical spaces, Gezi Park and Taksim Square and virtual spaces. Spatial practices that were performed in both physical and digital spaces revealed what Massey (2003: 4) calls “a global sense of place,’ i.e. ‘different stories coming together and, to one or another, becoming entangled.”

The paper also questioned the role of the moment which was crucial to understanding togetherness, actions and performances of the protests during the time of protests. Such limited times permitted us “to look seriously and critically at inequality and at the question of whether actual democratic institutions are really working.” (Calhoun, 2013: 38–39). One thing that was clear that a few trees and politics around these trees brought millions of people together. A few trees might seem meaningless, but the meaning they gained led us to revisit our understanding of public, public space, publicness and political subject.

Nevertheless, although a new type of opposition emerged from the protests, these practices only brought temporary, rather than permanent, changes to Turkish politics. In other words, there was power in the act of

the Gezi protests but they did not end up as a powerful act to bring about change. This post-Gezi instability arguably led to a sequence of events that challenged the power of the ruling party. Although the JDP has gained power legitimately by winning elections, it is also vulnerable and challenges to its power have produced more authoritarianism and state control, such as a ban on Twitter, YouTube and demonstrations in particular public spaces in the year after Gezi. These authoritarian practices have become “normal” in comparison to more repressive severe practices. After the coup attempt in 2016, hundreds of journalists and academics were arrested; many members of parliament from the pro-Kurdish party, HDP were also imprisoned; many academics were fired from the state-affiliated universities, and many NGOs were shut down. Consequently, although it might seem contrary to the multiple aims and ideals of the Gezi protests, the pluralist public sphere has been diminished, and social and political polarisation has increased ever since the Gezi protests. While this work aimed to reveal the complex and multiplicity of protests’ times and spaces, further research is needed to elaborate on the outcome of the Gezi Park protests and their impact on the political sphere in Turkey.

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BOOK REVIEW

Eric D. Weitz

A World Divided. The Global Struggle for Human Rights in the Age of Nation-States

(Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019, ISBN: 978-0-691-14544-0, 544 pp., £ 27)

There is nothing new under the sun. *A World Divided*, the last book by Eric D. Weitz, is a collection of histories and issues stemming from worldwide struggles for human rights. Here lies the strength of the volume: a ride through nationalism, regardless of geography, religion, ethnicity.

However, this work has a weak point: the leftist perspective, which fails to analyse and condemn criminal nationalism perpetrated in the name of Marxist-Leninist ideology. Weitz tries to explain the growing right-wing nationalism, attributing the contributing causes, in fact, to racial and ethnic discrimination, to “imperialist” policies, and economic exploitation. He has devoted his studies essentially to the history of the socialist Republic of Weimar and to civil rights and genocides, and with this work he remains coherent with his bibliography, drawing heavily on what he has already published.

Among the stories told in *A World Divided*: the exploitation of slaves in Brazil, the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust, the Israeli-Palestinian question (in an anti-Zionist perspective), and Namibia, before the colony of the German Empire, later occupied by racist South Africa, until the country gained independence after a conflict supported by the Soviet Union, Cuba and Angola. It would be useful for potential readers, to frame the Namibian struggle within the confrontation of the two blocs through their proxies during the Cold War; it would help to understand the events from a historical perspective. Also, the story of the Greek rebels to gain independence from the Ottoman Empire, although part of the revolutionary wave in Europe that took place in Spain, Portugal, Italy, is presented in the context of the struggle against the absolutist and despotic state, although the Sublime Porte was anything but a nation-state, as much as a multinational entity like the Soviet Union.

Indeed, Weitz raises the Soviet Union and Communism as a bulwark of civil rights, forgetting the Red Terror during the Russian Civil War (1917-23) that began with the October Revolution (Trotzky, 1922) thus passing over the terrible crimes of Stalinism and the repression of the basic civil rights by the Soviet leadership – not to mention the military repression in Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968) and the military intervention in Afghanistan (1979-89). While tackles the issue of human rights in divided Korea, Weitz skips the Cambodian genocide perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge under the leadership of Communist Party general secretary Pol Pot (1975-79). Even Africa experimented the red terror: after taking control of the Derg, the military junta, in 1977, the new head of state, Mènghistu Hailè Mariàm, a Marxist-Leninist army officer, started a violent political campaign against members of the competing Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (Wiebel, 2017). But Weitz prefers to dwell on the Rwanda genocide of 1984. As for the inclusion of the Greek revolution, among those that occurred in that period, Waltz does not explain the reason for this choice.

The book puts emphasis on the human rights of peoples v. centralised state, but omits a fundamental analysis: often the population is nomadic and does not reside permanently within established boundaries (“stateless people”) (Fortes, M., Evans-Pritchard, 1995). A consideration that leads to the next step, namely the inclusion, in nation-states, of folks that have little or nothing to do with it due to ethnic, linguistic, religious and, more generally, cultural differences, and which is at the root-cause of the so-called “frozen conflicts” in the area of the former Soviet Union (Marsili, 2016). These are the underpinnings of the struggles that Weitz summarises in *A World Divided*. It is useful here to recall the famous sentence for which Mozambique's first president, Samora Machel, is

remembered for: “For the nation to live, the tribe must die”. The sentence effectively summarises the problem of the building of the nation-state in Africa, a continent in which Western powers had forced populations within drawn borders at the Berlin Conference of 1884-85. In fact, the book places Western countries, *inter alia* the US as the 'leader of the free world', among those responsible for the oppression of peoples. To understand many of these conflicts it would be enough to refer to the 1993 classic by Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilisations*.

The massacres of Native Americans and their enslavement by the U.S. colonies disregards that the majority of Native American tribes did practise some form of slavery before the European introduction of African slavery into North America (Lauber, 1913). It would have been more correct to note that several socialist countries, including some African countries, although already independent, have only recently abolished this hateful practice. It passes over in silence also slavery still existing in practice in contemporary Africa (e.g., Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad, and Sudan). Probably, this would not have benefited the globalist cause the book advocates openly.

Despite neglecting the historical role of the state and its characteristics, the book mainly draws on primary sources (UN, special tribunals and the main instruments on human, political and civil rights). While this is the strength of the volume, its weakness lies in having neglected to engage the discussion on a solid theoretical framework, for instance an in-depth overview of the differences between the basic concepts of nation-state and state-nation (Flint, 2016). Natural law and the law of nations provide the legal framework to uphold both the right to independence and the right to resistance – or to self-defence, according to the fathers of modern political philosophy and state theorists such as Hobbes, Lock and Vattel (Marsili, 2019). These cornerstone principles are interconnected and sometimes they are difficult to combine, that's exactly what Weitz tries to do in this book. It would have been wiser to choose to analyse only one face of the prism.

What remains, then, of this work? It is an attempt to summarise the history of the global struggle for human rights in the age of nation-states. From a scholar like Weitz we would have expected more, not so much from a quantitative point of view – the book is big enough – as regarding the

neutrality of the argument and the completeness of information. However, students of contemporary history, political philosophy, political science, and international law will find this publication useful, as it provides a digest of the struggles for human rights, selected by the author among dozens available, that have occurred in the last 100 years. What is missing, is partly hinted at in the book's conclusions, an unpretentious summary of its contents.

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BOOK REVIEW

Seth Anziska

Preventing Palestine: A Political History from Camp David to Oslo

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018, ISBN: 9780691177397, 435 pp., \$35.00)

The Camp David Accords, signed in 1978 between Egypt and Israel culminating in the Egypt-Israel peace treaty in 1979, have been praised by politicians and scholars alike as a significant turning point in Arab-Israeli peacemaking. This was the first time that an Arab state has signed a peace treaty with the Jewish state, thus making another Arab-Israeli war highly unlikely. As a result of the deal, Egypt recaptured the Sinai Peninsula which had been occupied by Israel since the Six-Day-War of 1967. Moreover, before the start of the process, Egyptian president Anwar Sadat had directly appealed to the Israelis by addressing the Israeli parliament Knesset, notwithstanding his tough rhetoric regarding the necessity for Israel to address the Palestinian issue.

Irrespective of such talk, Seth Anziska in *Preventing Palestine*, directs our attention to the autonomy negotiations conducted between Egypt and Israel as part of the Camp David process (1979-1982) and points out that the Palestinians were to a large extent sacrificed to the national interests of Egypt and Israel. In other words, the roots of Palestinian “statelessness” can be found in the Camp David Accords (300-302), which focused on the resolution of the Egyptian-Israeli dispute by restituting occupied Egyptian territories back to that country and relegating the Palestinian issue to autonomy talks which did not entail the establishment of a Palestinian state in the future.

Furthermore, *Preventing Palestine* offers an in-depth analysis of Palestinian statelessness based on documents, interviews, primary and secondary sources, and introduces us to all the influential protagonists from American Presidents Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George Bush and Bill Clinton to Israeli prime ministers, Palestinian revolutionaries as well mid-level diplomats who conducted American peace efforts in the Middle East. Anziska’s access to the archives in Israel, Lebanon, the UK and the US is extensive, revealing

numerous negotiations between all of the parties concerned. Moreover, we find ample evidence regarding the approach of American presidents to the Palestinian-Israeli question. For instance, Jimmy Carter’s depiction of the settlements as illegal and his call for a Palestinian homeland were quite revolutionary for its time. Nonetheless, this depiction was overturned by Ronald Reagan who argued that the settlements were, in fact, not illegal. Analyzing the inner workings of the American government, Anziska offers a highly readable and incisive analysis of American foreign policy, its main actors including national security advisers as well as the Jewish community in the US with their great interest in Israeli affairs.

It should be added that the book also discusses the 1982 Lebanon War, Operation Peace for Galilee according to Israeli parlance, and how it exacerbated the negative status of Palestinians in that country. In sum, *Preventing Palestine*, analyzed the Camp David Accords in the first few chapters, followed by the Oslo peace process establishing a linkage between those two different peacemaking efforts.

The book is also valuable as the author quite successfully demonstrates the ideological outlook of the Likud Prime Minister Menachem Begin (1977-1983), who perceived the West Bank to be part of the land of Israel, hence he never had the intention to let go of these territories as he considered them to be included in the Jewish homeland. His autonomy plan seems to inform current Israeli leaders from Benjamin Netanyahu to Naftali Bennett both of whom have been the champions of the Israeli settlers in the West Bank and have clinched to the idea of an undivided, complete Land of Israel (Eretz Israel haShelema).

Moreover, Anziska argues that the Oslo Process which resulted in the Declaration of Principles signed between the Palestine Liberation

Organization (PLO) and Israel in 1993 and the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in 1994, had the Camp David Accords' autonomy framework as its "basis" (3) since Palestinian statehood was never certain according to the step- by- step approach of Oslo. Nonetheless, it was certainly one of the most important topics of the final status talks to be conducted between Israel and Palestine and it was generally understood that an independent Palestinian state was to be established as a result of the Oslo Process. The author seems to disregard this aspect of the assumptions of Oslo since the question of a Palestinian State has been part and parcel of the demands of the PLO and its leader Yasser Arafat ever since the inception of their struggle from the late 1950s until the 1990s. In other words, the PNA was to be a temporary stop on the way to full independence. The fact that such an eventuality has not been achieved to this day does not mean that it was not the main objective of the Palestinians. Therefore, I do not necessarily see a direct link between the Camp David Accords and the Oslo process despite the similarities in the autonomy offered to the Palestinians. The PLO had already declared independence in 1988 and mutual recognition and negotiations with the Israelis were supposed to culminate into an independent state according to the wishes of the Palestinian leadership and the masses. The fact that such an eventuality was not mentioned or guaranteed in the Oslo agreements does not mean that autonomy was the end result of the negotiations.

Despite this caveat, I should point out that the book is multidimensional- encapsulating political history, foreign policy and divergent ideologies prevalent in the US, Israel and Palestine. I should also add that I found the *Preface* to be as important and interesting as the rest of the book, since in the former the author narrates his own personal and ideological journey from a committed Zionist to an objective scholar of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as well as American foreign policy in the Middle East. His observations of the difficulties the Palestinians experienced at the checkpoints were a moment of truth for the recognition of the "other" living in what he considered to be Judea and Samaria as part of the Land of Israel. His firsthand experience in the Gush Etzion settlements and his trips to Israel proper resulted in Anziska to recognize the Palestinian reality and tragedy.

In conclusion, *Preventing Palestine* is a welcome addition to the books on the Middle East peace process, the Arab-Israeli conflict, American foreign policy in the Middle East as well ideology and

domestic politics in the United States, Israel and Palestine. It should be of interest to scholars, students and general readers who are concerned in all the topics mentioned above.

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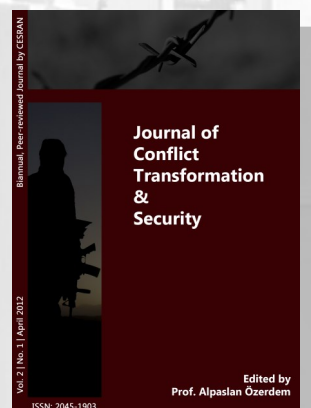
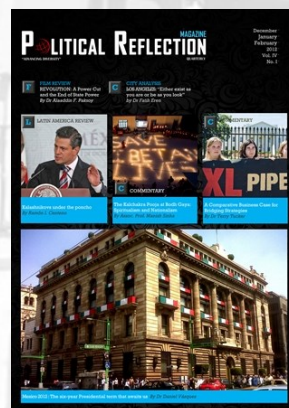
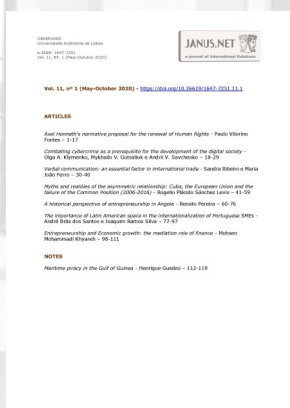
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BOOK REVIEW

Erik Voeten

Ideology and International Institutions

(Princeton: Princeton Press University, 2021, ISBN: 978-0-691-20731-5, 239 PP., £78.00)

In a post-ideological time emanated by the contested 'end of history' after the period of the Cold War, Erik Voeten has the merit of revitalising a debate that experts and scholars often take for granted or overlook. As the title states, *Ideology and International Institutions* does not simply provide two comprehensive angles of investigation over the international politics and institutions, but also reflect on the importance of how ideological visions ameliorate or exacerbate conflictual situations, strengthen economic investments and memberships, implement or discourage international cooperation.

It goes without saying that ideology is the cypher for getting a glimpse of the contemporary worldwide scenarios where political actors and international institutions position themselves accordingly. Hence, Voeten does not delve into the historical development of ideological visions in the global arena but rather advance a spatial modelling framework where political actors and international institutions compete and coordinate with each other.

The structure of the book is organised to allow the reader to navigate between a bundle of contestations, mechanisms and major concerns through the lens of ideology. At the centre of the first part, Voeten coherently employs ideology itself for testing his assumptions within the academic literature, which are used for debating international issues of distributive policies, militarised conflicts, UN voting sessions and others alike. In the second part of the book, the main argumentation is constructed around two key-factors – respectively the interdependence of states and institutions, and a low-ideological institutional space. Within this, ideology is not always the 'same thing', but much of the glue that leads groups of states influencing one another in order to steer their interests and intentions for

pursuing a specific set of policies. This telling phenomenon goes hand in hand with the self-enforcing of international institutions, whose incentives for cooperation and/or completion are driven along with thinner yet relevant ideal stances. Voeten assumes correctly that a larger space for interdependence makes a bigger room for self-enforcing institutions that favour or directly counterbalance the positions that countries often hold for seeking out specific policies or expressing noncompliance. In this direct proposition, ideology functions as an organising device through which one can better understand the challenges of the international liberal order and multilateralism.

However, it should be clarified that Voeten depicts domestic and international politics neither as deeply rooted in ideology, nor as entirely ideological. While a low-ideological institutional space reflects ideological visions, the latter remain imperfect ways for fully understanding contemporary contestations between political actors and international institutions. Yet again, Voeten argues that ideology is nonetheless a useful analytical construct that encapsulates political and normative features for which political actors and states, as well as IGOs and institutions, come along or distant from each other.

In support of this argumentation, the instances of distributive politics and the rampant rise of illiberalism and populist forces are undoubtedly worthy of noting. According to the 'distributive argument', Voeten unravels how ideology drives the distribution of information and its interpretation within a low-ideological space. Both distribution and coordination, which are political tasks and require expertise, display the interdependence of states and institutions through the incentives of sharing information about a wealth of public and private issues. In the case of

illiberal democracies, instead, Voeten argues that some populist forces have less and less space to manoeuvre due to national and international institutions with longer and stronger liberal traditions. In fact, if it is true that populists often complain about the interference of international law in domestic affairs, it is also true that populists themselves are less likely to pursue 'exit strategies' that they rhetorically refer to. Interestingly, the rhetoric noncompliance does not only weaken these 'exit strategies', but it also questions whether or not their voters would seriously support populist strategies until the end.

In short, these two examples are instructive for exploring how ideology as well as ideological stances and visions are not divorced from material interests of power – be they security, economic or other alike. This is why, in the very end, Voeten's main argumentation is as relevant and persuasive for assessing the contemporary actorness of states and their ideological interlinks across time and space. It therefore sheds light on the fact that different network positions have constrained states in spite of the fact that their political behaviour has not changed. This nuanced perspective does not only give credit to Voeten's understanding of international context as a low-ideological institutional space since ideology is inconspicuously yet relevantly challenging the liberal order. It also verifies yet again how noncompliance with liberal stances and/or international membership are a matter of peace or war and display reversely a path of exclusion, contestation, and conflicts that may likely constraint or favour the performance of some states and political actors in the international context.

Last but not least, Voeten's use of ideology is neither employed as an old-fashioned paradigm, nor labelled along pejorative lines in the field of international relations and global politics. Conversely, it is understood as a scholarly lens through which to contribute and advance the state-of-the-art research. In this instance, it may seem that the whole argumentation lies in the realist, liberal and constructivist traditions of the International Relations studies. Instead, Voeten challenges the theoretical frameworks from a variety of different perspectives in literature, thereby providing a comprehensive study which succeeds in overviewing how thinner ideological visions are the new challenges of the contemporary liberal order, and how ideology itself plays a role in a primary dimension of contestation for a large number of countries.

Therefore, this book is not only worth being considered for students of political science, but also for those whose interdisciplinary background and expertise would undoubtedly benefit from understanding the role that ideology can play within institutions worldwide.

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BOOK REVIEW

Elizabeth R. Nugent

After Repression: How Polarization Derails Democratic Transition

(Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2020, ISBN: 978-0-691-20305-8, 256 pp., \$29.95)

Since the waves of protests of 2011 in the Middle East and North Africa which became known as “Arab Spring”, many commentators and scholars have discussed the errors and shortcomings that accounted for near total failures of such unprecedented revolutionary movements sweeping across the Arab World. While no single consensus has been established among scholars on that end, there seems to be an agreement on the fact that the region as a whole has been left worse off than it was before the revolution, with divided societies along the lines of political, social, ethnic, and economic differences. In *After Repression: How Polarization Derails Democratic Transition*, Elizabeth Nugent puts forward a novel theory of polarization under autocratic regimes by comparing the cases of Egypt and Tunisia, two countries whose long-ruled authoritarian presidents had been dislodged by the Arab Spring protests. As noted by the author, the two countries were the first to stage the protests, resulting in swift resignations of long-ruled authoritarian leaders (i.e. Hosni Mubarak for thirty years in Egypt and Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali for twenty three years in Tunisia). Yet, the transition culminated differently for both countries: while it has led to “democratic consolidation” in Tunisia, it has resulted in “reentrenched authoritarianism” in Egypt. As the title of the book suggests, it was (the high level of) polarization that derailed democratic transition in Egypt, while a lesser degree of polarization in Tunisia offered a window of cooperation and compromise. The book contains four sections (namely, Theoretical Perspectives; Repertoires of Repression; Repression, Identity, and Polarization; and After Authoritarianism), which are further broken down into 10 Chapters walking readers through every step in the suggested link between repression and polarization.

Nugent draws a causal link between state repression and political polarization through a two-stage process. The main argument asserts that first, the nature of repression of opposition shapes the political identities of opposition groups, and then “these identities in turn determine the level of political polarization at the moment of transition” (p.10). Drawing on social-psychological explanations, the author shows that political parties become less polarized when they suffer together under an authoritarian regime, due to their shared experiences of trauma and repression. By disaggregating authoritarian state repression into two types, namely “widespread” and “targeted”, Nugent argues that the former targets all opposition groups (as in Tunisia), thus diminishing in-group identification and decreasing polarization, while the latter singles out a specific group (as in the case of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt), hence strengthening in-group identification in the target group and increasing political polarization. As results of repeated interactions with the state’s repressive apparatus, opposition groups form their identities vis-à-vis out-groups. As such, widespread repression leads groups to identify themselves with the broader opposition group as common victims of repression and help “permeate previously constructed boundaries” (p.47) with more positive feelings of out-groups and willingness to converge central policy preferences. Targeted repression, on the other hand, increases in-group favouritism and exaggerates inter-group differences, bringing about more negative feelings of outgroups and more divergences on preferences.

This central argument is evidenced by the case of Tunisia and Egypt in the book. In both countries, Islamist parties, i.e. Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Ennahda in Tunisia, won 37 per cent of votes in the elections that followed the uprising, in a

political environment in which opposition parties were divided along the religious-secular cleavage. Common experiences of widespread repression among opposition groups under the Ben Ali regime (1987 through the 2010-2011 uprising) have led them to gather around the flagship of broader opposition over time. From her interviews with members of opposition parties, Nugent notes that “individuals spoke more about ‘the opposition’ as a cohesive entity” (p.137) about the later times of the Ben Ali regime. The author argues that repression shapes political identities not only through the psychological mechanism, but also through social and organizational ones. As such, widespread repression brought together the Tunisian opposition in shared spaces through forced exiles or imprisonments, facilitating their social interactions with each other which then resulted in increased positive feelings among opposition groups. This interaction among the opposition was commensurate with higher levels of convergence on parties’ preferences toward issues of high salience for political contestation, such as religion and politics, which was visible in parties’ changing manifestos and official statements, as well as formal agreements among opposition parties (p.150). The Egyptian opposition, on the other hand, has become highly polarized in attitudes and preferences over time due to targeted repression against the Muslim Brotherhood under the Mubarak regime. The Muslim Brotherhood has largely felt isolated, partially blaming other opposition groups for their silence against the repression and/or cooptation with the regime. This has resulted in increasing in-group identification while decreasing identification with other groups (p.177). Furthermore, unlike in Tunisia, opposition groups have had little to no shared experience of repression or shared social space for interaction. Therefore, the understanding of a broader “opposition” was absent in Egypt, which precluded opposition groups from cooperation and compromise in the post-uprising period. This was most evident in some opposition groups’ backing of the coup against the Muslim Brotherhood-led regime in 2013.

Nugent both challenges and contributes to the existing literature on repression and preference formation. First, Nugent refutes the common idea of repression as a strategic choice in the hands of political leaders, and argues that “repressive environments of independent authoritarian regimes are largely determined by previous state-building projects” (p.60). According to Nugent, it is path dependent; thus, the different coercive

institutions in Egypt and Tunisia are the legacies of management styles and motivations of British and French colonialism, respectively. Second, diverting from common explanations of preference formations based on structure, strategy, or ideology, Nugent focuses on micro-foundational cognitive processes, which are defined as “pathways through which individuals form and update preferences about politics” (p.37). Doing so, the author explains how repressive tools shape individuals’ preferences as well as affections not only through psychological, but also social and organizational mechanisms by use of targeted versus widespread repression.

The main strength of this book is the evidence which the author provides by combining both observational and experimental data and analyses. Nugent conducted field research in Egypt and Tunisia between 2012 and 2018, interviewing a representative sample of actors who constituted the democratic opposition before and after the Arab Spring uprisings. Furthermore, the findings from observational data on the case studies are further supported by results of an experiment in a controlled lab environment, which teases out the psychological causal mechanism underpinning the main theory.

In sum, Nugent’s *After Repression* presents a novel theory that links the nature of repression to political polarization in order to explain successes and failures of democratic transitions in Egypt and Tunisia, and beyond. The book offers suggestive evidence not only to explain or understand historical events, but also to warn political elites around the world of the galling process that derailed democratic transition in Egypt. It also speaks to a broader audience of scholars and students who are interested in the topics of repression, democratic transition, identity and preference formations, as well as authoritarian regimes.

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