

## **Turkey and the Palestinian Question since al-Aqsa Intifada**

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Turkey's Palestinian policy is something beyond a mere foreign policy behavior and reflects the movements of the fault lines in domestic politics, societal balances and state-society relations. When these balances were disrupted and tension in the state-society relations were raised, Turkish foreign policy distanced itself from the Palestinian question. The state-society relations in Turkey are not in peace with their own history and the tension in these relations was reflected on certain foreign policy issues. The Palestinian question has been a battleground that a number of different identities have struggled with. The Palestinian question has been different than other Middle Eastern problems, and large segments of Turkish society have kept in touch with Palestinian matters. The core of the Palestinian question for the Turks is the status of Jerusalem (Al-Quds) and who will control the sacred places in the holy city. This has been one of the sensitive foreign policy issues in which Turkish society showed the utmost interest.

In this article, I will analyze the Palestinian question in Turkish foreign policy since the Al-Aqsa intifada that emerged in October 2000. Ankara's foreign policy toward the Middle East in the aftermath of the 28 February 1997 decisions has been hostage to relations with Israel in this region. The 28 February decisions were considered as the postmodern *coup* of the military in Turkey and created an earthquake-like impact in domestic politics. This soft *coup* also increased the bureaucratic control of foreign policy and minimized the societal impact on it. It is not incidental that the nationalist moment, the rise of human rights

violations, disrespecting the rule of law and democratic institutions, and the strengthening of the anti-EU bloc coincided with the official policy's distancing from the Palestinian question, even at a time when tension in the occupied Palestinian lands escalated to a dangerous extent and human sufferings reached an unbearable level. The September 11 attacks to the U.S. soil have consolidated the current trends fostering the black and white perception of security issues in the Middle East in the eyes of Turkish foreign policy makers. I argue that this position is Turkey's official preference and there are alternative policy lines offered at the societal level. The place of the Palestinian question in Turkish foreign policy will be analyzed within this framework that incorporates a number of relevant factors to the discussion, in addition to traditional foreign policy analysis.

### **Identity and Foreign Policy**

The basic elements of the Turkish state identity were mainly constructed in the early Republican era, when the founding fathers of the Republic applied a reform project to create a "civilized and modern" nation.<sup>1</sup> This emerging new identity –later called the Kemalist identity- was the product of a pragmatic-eclectic ideology that took shape on an international level in the 1920s and 1930s, inspired by Comtean positivism adopted by certain Ottoman intellectuals at the end of the nineteenth century, as well as the process of westernization initiated during the same period. This project was basically a modernization project dependent upon the three pillars of nationalism, westernization and secularism. In this vein, the foundational elements of the Kemalist identity were the abandonment of the Ottoman past, the termination of Islamic power in the public sphere -preventing it from functioning as a source of political legitimacy, and an understanding of citizenship that excludes non-Muslim minorities, all within an ethno-linguistic and territorial conception of state. While clamouring for increased modernisation and Westernization so as to elevate Turkey to the economic level of the civilized world, the official identity, at the same time, has been home to

distrust and a latent enmity towards the West inherited from the Ottoman administrative elite. Any careful analyst will recognise that the official identity has been shaped not by limited westernization but through praxis of a third world nationalism deeply influenced from the nineteenth century nation-state model of Europe.<sup>2</sup>

Although the official identity was projected as a civic one, the burden of the Ottoman imperial past and Kurdish rebellions in early periods of the republic led to a shift to ethnic nationalism exclusively based on Turkishness.<sup>3</sup> The early steps of the Kemalist long march toward westernization were in conformity with creating an ethnic and homogenous national identity at home. As Kiliç argued: “in the early Republican era, there had not been seen an identity crises. Contrarily, the foreign policy extensions of the Turkish identity show us that the westernization and nationalism were the overlapping tendencies during the early Republican period.”<sup>4</sup> The 75 years of westernization process could not diminish the material and mental differences between Turkey and Europe. Indeed, the intrinsic enmity survived with the strengthening senses of Turkish self and European other. The limited nature of Turkish westernization comes to fore the limited scope of change, such as adoption of the Latin script and family law changes.

The new Turkish republic had a defensive character and it would not be wrong to argue that this character is inherited from the Ottoman experience of preserving the country in the last three centuries of the empire. Atatürk’s (the founder of modern Turkey) principle of “Peace at Home, Peace in the World” has long been a dominant rallying cry, and foreign policy makers have conducted foreign policies in an introverted and reluctant manner. The paranoia, or Sevres Syndrome, which has a long history among the Turkish people, is based on the notion that the country is surrounded by enemies and constantly faces the danger of break-up or partition. This distinctively Turkish view of the world still plays a vital role in shaping the minds of Nationalist foreign policy makers. This explanation reminds us of the

Jutta Weldes' argument that: "insecurity is itself the product of processes of identity construction in which the self and the other, or multiple others, are constituted...they can all be seen as resting on the assumption that identity and insecurity are produced in a mutually constitutive process."<sup>5</sup>

Thus, it is not appropriate to employ realist measures to explain Turkish foreign policy behaviour. It has its own "rights and wrongs" and is heavily value-oriented. Namely, official identity defines the threats based on its own culture of security. Foreign policies come to be extensions of domestic politics and the "others" excluded during the construction of the Kemalist identity provide negative input for foreign policy formulation, making foreign policy hostage to considerations of the establishment identity. In the end, ideological narrowing in domestic politics causes foreign policies to be harsher, less sensitive to change and less flexible.

### **Regional Dimension, the U.S. and Europe**

Although it is called the peace process, the real situation does not match with the term "peace" in the Middle East and it is rather a multi-dimensional and complex post-modern war strategy. This strategy has been backed offensively by the US-Turkey-Israel axis and defensively by the inability of the Arabs and other Middle Eastern actors. Only a number of European initiatives should be taken seriously to prevent Israeli expansion to the Palestinian lands and to cleanse the Palestinians. Turkey's so-called support to the Palestinian sufferings in the aftermath of the Al-Aqsa intifada could not go beyond symbolic meaning and even could not verbally challenge the Israeli terror in the occupied territories. This situation deserves to be paid attention since it exemplifies how a state can pursue a foreign policy in its region, which was characterized by historical and cultural bonds, in a manner that is so much in contradiction and against the societal demands.

Turkish foreign and military policy could not catch the realities of the post-Cold War and continue to play the U.S. outpost in the Middle East, taken its approval of the U.S. positions granted. Turkey was a loyal ally of the Western bloc during the Cold War era. The relations between the U.S. and Turkey were not free from frequent problems, but Ankara never had a privilege of being at odds with the American interests in the Middle East. For example, during the Jupiter missile crisis, Turkish establishment recognised how a superpower can ignore the vital interests of a small ally. Turkey's first serious encounter with the dominant elements of the post-Cold War order was a similar experience since NATO did not guarantee a joint action in case of an Iraqi attack to the Turkish territories. However, even under this condition, Turkey extended the utmost assistance to the U.S. led coalition forces against Iraq.

In the following period, there was an expectation that Turkish-American relations could face serious setbacks as the result of the increasing sensitivities of human rights and democratisation issues in the U.S. foreign policy. The increasing role of ethnic lobbies and human rights organizations even led to a congressional ban over delivery of the helicopters to Turkey in 1995. The congress made the release of the weapons conditional upon major developments in democratisation and human rights issues implying positive developments in the Kurdish issue. However, the ban was lifted by the congress in 2000 and the continuous top-level support to Turkey, ranging from Pentagon to state department officials, showed that there was no major breakthrough in bilateral relations.<sup>6</sup> Turkey's strategic importance was underlined by the state department's 1999 congressional presentation for foreign operations as follows:

Turkey is vitally important to U.S. interests. Its position athwart the Bosphorus -at the strategic nexus of Europe, the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Caspian- makes it an essential player on a wide range of issues vital to U.S.

security, political and economic interests. In a region of generally weak economies and shaky democratic traditions, political instability, terrorism and ethnic strife, Turkey is a democratic secular nation that draws its political models from Western Europe and the United States. Turkey has co-operated intensively with the U.S. as a NATO ally and is also vigorously seeking to deepen its political and economic ties with Europe.<sup>7</sup>

A close look at the history of arms transfer to Turkey supports this argument. The arms flow to Turkey increased in 1984. This had nothing to do with the Cold War since the Soviet Union was in a sharp decay.<sup>8</sup> Noam Chomsky underlined this arms flow as a negative input to regional order and stability resulting in an international clientele doctrine and dependency relations not much different than the Cold War era. He further added that “in 1997, US military aid to Turkey was more than in the entire period 1950 to 1983.”<sup>9</sup> One should add that 80 percent of the arms in Turkey are of the U.S. origin. In this line of discussion, it is not possible for the Turkish establishment to support anti-Israeli policies, which would be considered a major opposition to the U.S. interests in the Middle East.

The U.S. policy in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks has undergone the influence of the hawks and turned to play aggressive hegemony in the name of “war on terrorism.” An increasing number of people in the Middle East share the point of view that the U.S. policy makers tended to destroy international law and international institutions on a world scale and the pretexts like “defending civilization” are no more valid for finding receptive audiences. These policies would rather generate more terrorism in the region. A headline on the front page of the *New York Times* uncovered the understanding, which is gaining widespread acceptance among the Western leaders and commentators. That is: “US Demands Arab Countries Choose Sides.”<sup>10</sup> The implication of this trend on the Palestinian-

Israeli conflict is to put the Palestinians into a problematic position, which is required to prove that they are on the “right” side. In this line of logic, there was no questioning of the Israeli side, since what is understood from terror is the one committed against the U.S. and presumably to its proxies. In this context, the Turkish over-dependence to the U.S. policies, which is fed by both material and ideational factors, leaves no choice but to follow pro-U.S. and pro-Israeli policies that would mean Turkish establishment’s increasing detachment from its own society and the regional realities.

Despite the perceptions of its importance to the U.S., there is a historically rooted suspicion about the European designs for Turkey. More important for our discussion, Turkey's European Union membership also requires a substantial change in Turkish foreign policy toward the Middle East. The capitals of Ankara's neighbors will be among the main beneficiaries of these prospective reflected changes. Indeed, Syrian deputy president Abdulhalim Haddam mentioned about this positive expectation during his visit to Turkey in May 2001. He said that if Turkey has better and close relations with the Arab countries, it may increase its leverage in the negotiations with the European Union.<sup>11</sup> However, it is not possible to argue that Arab countries and the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) are in a better position in supporting the Palestinians. The OIC failed to take a strong united stand against Israel during its November 2000 meeting. This organization had been established in 1969 as a response to Israeli attempts to damage an al-Aqsa mosque. During the course of time, the number of the member states increased and supposedly the OIC should have increased its strength and capability to deal with the problems and issues of the Muslim world. At present time, on the contrary, it is far from defending Al-Quds from Israeli expansion and pictures the weakness and disunity of the Muslim world in their vital issues.<sup>12</sup>

Turkish establishment's foreign policy identity and their in-depth security relations with the U.S. created an imaginary distance with the Palestinian question. As a recent

example, the leaders of Arab countries declared to U.S Vice President Dick Cheney during his Middle East tour in March 2002 that they can not bear the impact of two wars in case of the U.S. attack to Iraq. The first war in their mind was the Palestinian-Israeli war and they implied that an Iraqi operation may be acceptable if the war in Palestine ends. However, the Turkish prime minister made no reference to the Palestinian issue and only expressed his concern over a possible Kurdish state in case of Iraqi dissolution.<sup>13</sup>

### **Turkish Policy since Al-Aqsa Intifada**

Turkish-Israeli relations began long before the 28 February process, but *coup* makers added a strategic cooperation dimension under the prime ministry of veteran Islamist Necmettin Erbakan. The centrality of the peace process in Turkey's Middle East security perception misguided Turkish foreign policy since the inception of the Madrid Framework in 1991. Turkey's limited involvement, in this sense, has been to strengthen the peace process and help for its survival. However, Turkey is stuck with the failure of the peace process and the strategic cooperation turned to strategic isolation, in particular, after the Al-Aqsa intifada.<sup>14</sup>

The Turkish people's interest in the Palestinian question is not one-sided and there is considerable attention to Turkish politics and foreign policy in the Middle East. The Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat is a close follower of Turkish politics and knows about Turkish society's sensitivity of the Palestinian question. During an interview with a group of Turkish journalists, Arafat said: "I will accept the solution of the Turkish people to the Palestinian question."<sup>15</sup> In this line, Turkish security expert Gencer Ozcan argued that Turkey should be on the side of the Palestinians and pointed out that Turkey is behind the French government backing the Palestinians in their just struggle, though French society is even not close to Turkish society in supporting the Palestinians.<sup>16</sup> Throughout the 1990s, fueled by the 28 February process, which served as a civic façade for a soft military intervention, the main



obstacle to the further development of a state-society dialogue has been the state's unwillingness to respond to the demands of the people. That is why state-society relations in Turkey give an image of a dialogue of deaf and blind persons. The state establishment preserves its suspicion of societal attempts and frequently restricts their will and freedom of choice in a wide range of issues. This is a natural result of having an apparatus of a national security state. For example, Turkey extended five hundred thousand dollars to cover the losses of the Palestinians. This should be considered as a decent attempt, considering the recent severe economic crisis in Turkey. However, state officials acted reluctantly to lift the legal barriers to send private aid to the Palestinians despite the increasing demand.<sup>17</sup> Hasmet Babaoglu, veteran journalist, rightly questioned the official indifference to the escalating violence in occupied territories in March 2002.<sup>18</sup>

The indifference was not only an issue in state circles; intellectuals and media failed to respond adequately as well. Turkish people reached for the timely analysis and knowledge of the violence in the occupied territories from the European television channels and foreign reporters' articles until the escalation of conflict in late March. It is worthy to note that even this postmodern detachment could not prevent the Turkish public from keeping their touch with the Palestinian cause. A poll conducted in October 2000 showed that 71 percent of Turkish society has an interest in Palestinian affairs and 60 percent demand a more active Turkish role in behalf of the Palestinian people.<sup>19</sup> Another one conducted in November 2000 showed that 41 percent are in favour of delivering Jerusalem to Palestinian rule, 29 percent proposed autonomous administration, and only 2 percent favours Israeli rule over the city.<sup>20</sup> A recent poll on the role of public opinion in foreign policy showed that the Palestinians are in the fourth rank in Turkish people's perception of friendship in international relations. Turkish people's trust to the Palestinians is well above the trust to the Israelis and the Americans.<sup>21</sup>

There were widespread protests of Israeli expansion and violence in Palestinian lands in March and April 2002. Different segments of Turkish society, ranging from political parties to gay communities, joined their hands and hearts for extending support to the Palestinians. In addition, the leaders of three religious traditions—Islamic, Christian and Jewish—in Turkey jointly released a declaration entitled “Istanbul call for peace” and demanded an immediate end to the violence, which can not be accepted by any religious traditions.<sup>22</sup> The comments of Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer in the aftermath of the emergence of the Al-Aqsa intifada clearly represented a response to the concern of Turkish society on this issue:

The Muslim world was deeply upset by the violent deeds against our Palestinian brothers after Friday's Prayer on October the 28<sup>th</sup> in Jerusalem, which Islam deems to be among the most sacred lands, following certain irresponsible provocations. Resorting to violence no matter for what purpose, and using weapons in sacred lands is totally unacceptable. Clashes scattered rapidly after the upsetting event, and very unfortunately, use of weapons by Israeli soldiers caused several deaths. I do sympathize with those who lost their lives after these terrible occurrences. It is our common wish that a fair agreement be arrived at as soon as possible so that such occurrences are never repeated and common sense presides in the region, our Palestinian brothers enjoy rights - as accepted by the international community - including the establishment of their own state.<sup>23</sup>

In contrary to the public sentiments, there are popular misperceptions in Turkey's establishment media about the Palestinians and Arabs in general. The most popular one is Arab's grabbing back of Ottoman-Turkish soldiers in alliance with the British forces during

World War I.<sup>24</sup> It is interesting to note that this anti-Arab sentiment persists among the establishment elite and their self-dedicated media outlets. For example, Emin Colasan, in the middle of the rising Israeli terror in the occupied territories, questioned the support to the Palestinians and further argued that Arabs are paying the cost of grabbing back the Turks during WWI.<sup>25</sup> Thus, there was no need to prevent the unjust cleansing of the Palestinian Arabs in their historical lands. Second is Arafat's support and even his training of the leftist terrorists operating in Turkey in the 1970s. This idea is the result of an ignorance about the non-controllable situation in Beqaa Valley and Arafat's political strategies in those years. Third is the alleged lack of Arab support to Turkey in the Cyprus question and a number of other vital Turkish interests. This line of thought forgets the Turkish vote against Algeria's independence in the United Nations and the Arab planes carrying aides to Turkey during the 1974 Cyprus question.

The Turkish media, in the aftermath of the Al-Aqsa intifada, highly mentioned the inclusion of former president Suleyman Demirel to the special committee to investigate the escalation of violence in the occupied territories, which at the end prepared the Mitchell Plan with virtually no impact on the rising Israeli violence. Turkish contribution to this endeavor was presented as the only probable contribution to the Palestinian cause. Although only a limited number of columnists (the most prominent one was sports reporter Hasmet Babaoglu) underlined the serious crisis that emerged by the frequent rise of violence in occupied territories, an important number of them mentioned Demirel's visit to the Palestinian lands and also the letters sent by Turkish prime minister Bulent Ecevit to the Palestinian and Israeli leaders to put an end to the violence.<sup>26</sup> At the height of tension in March 2002, Turkish prime minister Bülent Ecevit denounced Israeli occupation of the Palestinian areas as a massacre. However, in the immediate aftermath, he explained that the word "massacre" was mistakenly used in his speech. This can hardly satisfy the domestic constituency and international actors

for an adequate Turkish contribution to the solution of the question. Interestingly, at the same time, Turkey signed almost a billion dollar worth weapon upgrade contract with the Israeli government that meant a net contribution to the Israeli economy, which is in crisis following the Al-Aqsa intifada.

The September 11 attack to the U.S. soil consolidated the black and white perception of security matters in the eyes of Turkey's foreign policy and the security elite. The world has been divided into two: those who are in the zone of peace and those who are in the zone of terrorism promoters. The immediate impact of the events of September 11 in the Middle East has been a strengthening of the U.S. hegemony in the region. Turkey considers the worldwide-viewed shot to the U.S. targets as an opportunity to explain what it has been dealing with during the last two decades, i.e. Kurdish separatism. Ankara refrained from supporting any movement that is called an independence struggle since it may turn out to be used for the Kurdish insurgency in southeastern Turkey. Policy entrepreneurs in Washington were quick enough to point out the Palestinian intifada as a terror movement and this line of thought provided a source of legitimacy to the Turkish elite for distancing themselves from the Palestinian matters.

## **Conclusion**

Turkey faces a serious identity crisis. The Turkish foreign policy toward Palestine has been a battleground for competing identities in Turkey, which are increasingly taking shape in the form of a state-versus-society fault line. It is indeed very rare to find this kind of one-to-one reflection of domestic fault lines in a foreign policy issue. The Turkish people's sensitivity and response to Israeli violence in the occupied lands is also symbolically their response to their own authoritarian leaders. In this sense, it may be a matter of humanity in the West, but the Middle Eastern people have no difficulty in understanding the assualting Israeli oppression. This is ironically part of daily life in this part of the world. In this sense,

Ankara is facing a major dilemma in the Palestinian question. This dilemma is whether the future of Turkey and its foreign policy will be determined by the will of the Turkish people or by the will of an anachronistic establishment identity and their perception of the world realities.

The egocentric illusion of Turkish establishment, which thinks that they can survive without adjusting their policies in accordance with the world scale changes, resulted in the formulation of problematic foreign policy behaviors. It is strange that they think they are doing right in a number of issues that in all else are wrong. The same illusion also misled them to think they can change or redirect world scale issues through home made initiatives. The recent meeting of the OIC and the EU common forum in February 2002 is such an example. One should question how such a meeting will serve for the improvement of a world system in tackling with the recruitment of terrorism while in a near geography Ankara's strategic partner pursues a planned cleansing campaign against the Palestinians.

For a long time, Turkish foreign policy was conducted without considering the anarchic order of the international system and structural requirements of the regional policy. The historico-cultural tie between Turkey and the Middle East that goes back to the early sixteenth century further complicates the situation. The foreign policy, first of all, has been detached from its societal roots, and it has been shaped by caution that pays utmost attention to save what already is at hand, daring that which comes out of the sub-consciousness of post-imperial state identity. Another important characteristic is the fact that the official establishment's identity determines the national interest and foreign policy behavior and this situation makes foreign policy hostage to state elites' worldview and domestic political considerations. In this sense, when serious developments and changes occur in domestic policy or something incompatible with local balances happens, then foreign policy behavior sharpens and its ability to follow the regional and international balances diminishes. There is

a direct relationship between Turkey's taking sides with the Palestinians in their just struggle and the increasing respect for democracy and human rights, promotion of the rule of law in the country, and fulfilling the requirements of integration to the European Union. The Turkish establishment is not successful in following these developments. It neither succeeded to produce a political system that is shaped by societal demands, nor does it want to appropriate global norms and standards.

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## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> "Civilized and modern" nation was the basic discourse and the main rationale of the reforms pursued in the early Republican era. Turkish modernization has a distinctive character of being defensive and the main aim was to provide a rapid bureaucratic and military development to counter foreign threats. In this sense, it differs from other Middle Eastern modernizations.

<sup>2</sup> Third World nationalism first expressed itself in the cultural field due to the backward state of political and social development. Kohn writes that this nationalism later became a protest against the West, which for a long time remained the teacher and the model for them: "this very dependence on the West often wounded the pride of the native educated class, as soon as it began to develop its own nationalism, and ended in an opposition to the 'alien' example and its liberal and rational outlook." This also consolidates the 'ethnic' nature of those nationalisms. In the same vein, Motyl also analyzes the rise of nationalism in East Europe and in the Third World within the context of modernization. He equates the attempts 'to be nationalist' with the attempts 'to be modern' in these countries. The Turkish case in the early Republican era best exemplifies the arguments of Kohn and Motyl. See: Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*, (New York: Macmillan, 1945), p. 330; Alexander J. Motyl, "The Modernity of Nationalism: Nations, States, and Nation-States in the Contemporary World," *Journal of International Affairs*, Volume 45 No 2, (1992), pp. 174-75

<sup>3</sup> Scholars of ethnicity and nationalism generally deduce two main types of national identities: ethnic and civic nationalisms. In the words of Charles A. Kupchan: "Ethnic nationalism defines nationhood in terms of lineage. The attributes that members of an ethnically defined national grouping share include physical characteristic, culture, religion, language, and a common ancestry. Individuals of a different ethnicity, even if they reside in and are citizens of the nation state in question do not become part of the national grouping." On the other hand, "Civic nationalism defines nationhood in terms of citizenship and political participation. Members of a national grouping that is defined in civic terms share participation in a circumscribed political community, common political values, a sense of belonging to the state in which they reside, and, usually, a common language." Thus, "a citizen is a national, regardless of ethnicity and lineage." See Charles A. Kupchan, "Introduction: Nationalism Resurgent", in Charles A. Kupchan (ed), *Nationalism and Nationalities in the New Europe*, (London: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Ramazan Kiliç, "Westernization versus West: The Resurrection of a Never Ending Dilemma in Turkish Modernization in the Post Cold War Era," Unpublished Research Paper.

<sup>5</sup> Jutta Weldes, *Cultures of Insecurity States, Communities, and the Production of Danger* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), pp 10-11.

<sup>6</sup> For more information, see Ekavi Athanassopoulou, "American-Turkish Relations since the End of the Cold War," *Middle East Policy* 8, no.3 (September 2001), pp.144-165;

<sup>7</sup> *Congressional Presentation for Foreign Operations for FY 1999* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 1999), p. 339.

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<sup>8</sup> See *Weapons Transfers and Violations of the Laws of War in Turkey* (New York: Human Rights Watch Arm, 1995).

<sup>9</sup> Noam Chomsky, "The New War Against Terror," Transcribed from the talk at The Technology & Culture Forum at MIT, 18 October 2001, at <http://www.zmag.org/GlobalWatch/chomskymit.htm>.

<sup>10</sup> New York Times, (25 September 2001).

<sup>11</sup> Yeni Safak, (10 May 2001).

<sup>12</sup> Yeni Safak, (14 November 2000). Historians appreciate the position of the OIC for Jerusalem and Muslim countries' staunch responses to the first intifada that emerged in late 1987. However, a few decades later, and from now on, the students of the Middle Eastern politics and history will have difficulties to understand the widespread silence against the violence in occupied territories, which led to a new popular uprising that has been motivated by the feelings of loneliness and hopelessness. The silent scream of the Palestinian teenagers who are defending their homelands and sufferings of innocent people, largely children and women, will be heard from the pages of history.

<sup>13</sup> Historians will probably notify that Israeli jet pilots bombing the Palestinians received their education in Turkish skies and future generations will judge about their past rulers basing on these historical records.

<sup>14</sup> It has been forgotten that former president Turgut Ozal apologized from the Algerians for Turkish support to France during the Algerian independence struggle. One may assume that those who pursue strategic cooperation with Ariel Sharon will also have to apologize from the Palestinians in the future.

<sup>15</sup> Yeni Safak, (9 February 2001).

<sup>16</sup> Yeni Safak, (16 October 2000).

<sup>17</sup> For more information see <http://www.mazlumder.org>.

<sup>18</sup> Hasmət Babaoglu, "Filistin Gercegi," *Sabah*, (14 March 2002).

<sup>19</sup> Ankara Sosyal Arastirmalar Merkezi, *Ekim-2000 Turkiye Gundemi Arastirmasi*, 3 October 2000.

<sup>20</sup> Ankara Sosyal Arastirmalar Merkezi, *Kasim-2000 Turkiye Gundemi Arastirmasi*, 2 December 2000.

<sup>21</sup> Kemal Kirisci, *Turk Dis Politikasinda Kamuoyunun Rolu* (Istanbul: Center for European Studies, 2002), p.14.

<sup>22</sup> Radikal, (12 April 2002).

<sup>23</sup> For the rest of the comments see, <http://www.cankaya.gov.tr/KONUSMALAR/25.10.2000-127.html>.

<sup>24</sup> If one goes in detail regarding the shaping of the Turkish mental map towards the Arabs, it is not possible to find a serious enmity up until the mid 1910s. One clear example is the absence of a negative Arab image in Ottoman literature until this time. Arabs are rather presented with their virtues and good traits, i.e. sincerity, hospitality and loyalty. This sentiment changed in the aftermath of WWI quickly and found its expression as "Ne Arab'in Yüzü, Ne Samin Sekeri"(neither face of Arab, nor candy of Damascus) in popular form, reflecting the anger against the Arabs.

<sup>25</sup> Emin Colasan, "Mehmetcigin 'Ah'lari," *Hurriyet*, (3 April 2002).

<sup>26</sup> A prominent exception is Yeni Safak columnist Cengiz Candar, who also has a personal encounter with the Palestinian cause. He frequently wrote on the issue and his articles played a role of a Palestinian alert in Turkey.