New Perspectives on India and Turkey: Connections and Debates

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Summary

1. History and Memory

The first set of four essays on historical linkages, offer the opportunity to continue the conversation between history and memory illustrated by the folk memory about Ghazi Miyan. Collective memory in Turkey is familiar with the late Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit's interest in India and its culture. Eyüp Özveren's paper draws on his visit to India in 2000. Turks who have witnessed Ecevit's long career as politician and his role in Turkish history, would surely have noted Ecevit's poetic affection for India. Özveren's opening essay charts the reconstitution of the geographical terrain with the movement of Alexander the Great from West to East, with references to medieval tales such as *Thousand and One Nights* and travelogues of Ibn Battuta and Marco Polo. Discussions of the Indian Ocean world-economy through European expansion until the 19th century, and the opening of the Suez Canal, are woven together with family history, memory, arts and literature.

In the next essay Shail Mayaram provides a historical and political perspective on Sufis in the cities that were located within the Ottoman and Mughal Empires. She argues that the Sufi emphasis on love is seen as a challenge to Salafis who are explicitly oriented to a Self/Other binary view of the world. Mayaram's essay explores the relation between the ethical and the political, analyzing discourses on nonviolence within Islamic thought. Clearly, the metaphysics and practices of Salafis and Sufis have profound implications for democracy and secularism.

Smita Tewari Jassal's paper in this book witnesses, numerous usages in healing shrines in North India are identical with those in the modern Turkish juridical terminology (*muakkil*, *bayan*), as well as in its colloquial language *(insaf*, *haziri*, *kalaam*, *ilm*, etc.). The essay compares on-going practices at specific healing shrines in north India with similar practices of *ziyaret* in Turkey. How people engage with, imagine, and reconstruct their historical past informs the essay, along with a reflection

on how the past is made meaningful and brought into conversation with the present.

2. Nationhood and leadership

Reform movements in religion, law and women's rights attracted the attention of intellectuals both in Madras and other regions of India. Atatürk's reforms continued to inspire Indian nationalists and thinkers struggling for freedom from colonial rule. V. Geetha examines the attractions of early republican Turkey for the Tamil "self-respecters," a subaltern group of Tamil social reformers and iconoclasts in the 1920s. While it is common to conceive of modernization in terms of Turkey's relationship to Europe and critique the model adopted by Atatürk, Geetha's essay foregrounds the shared internationalist discourse aimed at wresting the content of the "modern" from its imperial and western context and—paradoxically—relocating it within the local. Geetha argues that such a reconstituted "modern" enables us to think beyond older modernization theses.

Emrah Efe Khayyat's is the last essay in this section. Ottoman-Turkish feminist, humanist, novelist and critic Halide Edib's (1884-1964) single cause was aesthetic education to "awaken the spirit and the struggle for its evolution" of Muslim masses caught between dormant traditions and great powers fighting for world dominion. Her relentless search for the "ideal neo-Moslem" to meet the challenges of the modern world ended in India in her meeting with Gandhi. Invited in 1935 to teach at Delhi's newly instituted Jamia Millia Islamia, a University founded by enthusiastic Khilafatists, this "modern" Muslim woman, now veiled, mocked Islamists of the late Ottoman Empire for policing women's dress, while declaring Mahatma Gandhi the ideal "neo-Muslim." Edib embodies the conflicts and allegiances that marked the period. Many key issues of contemporary literary and cultural criticism were reframed, including the relationship between visibility and faith, politics of the veil, and the ideals of free speech.

3. Secularism

Since secularism clearly shapes public discourses and practices, the particularities and specificities of India and Turkey offer at least two distinct contextual frameworks to nuance the universalistic terms within which secularism has been hitherto understood. The essay by Srirupa Roy does just this. Her nuanced reading of secularism in the two

contexts argues that the ideology and practices of secularism in both India and Turkey secured rather than erased the political salience of religion. In India it contributed to an understanding of the political arena in terms of permanent majorities and permanent minorities constituted along the axis of religious identity. Turkish secularism contributed to the hegemony of Sunni Hanafite Islam through its efforts to establish the state's ability to control religious practice in the public sphere. Moreover, the secularist ideology entrenched an oppositional dichotomy of "secularism versus religion" as the dominant framework of Turkish politics, which inscribed religion as the prime motivator of all political activity. In conclusion Roy suggests that we locate secularism historically, so as to engage with the politics and ideology of the "secular" instead of conceiving it in abstract procedural terms. Thus, an overall re-evaluation of the relationship between religion and politics that does not presume a false choice between secular nationalism and religious nationalism is the way out, she argues.

Recognizing that political secularism is in crisis, Rajeev Bhargava argues that secularism needs to be re-conceptualized. To do this he revisits secularism as imagined by India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, arguing that Nehru's views on religion and secularism were unusually subtle, even complex, and remain acutely relevant. Far from secularism being about the defence of minority rights alone, Nehru's multi-faceted understanding includes countering inter-religious domination. The function of a secular state in Nehru's view was therefore to encourage freedom and equality, and promote justice-centred reforms—even if this meant efforts to liberate ordinary people from religious extremisms within their own religious spheres.

In his essay on the contemporary struggles faced by the Alevi community in Turkey, Mustafa Şen addresses the question of why Alevis resist being seen as minorities. He argues that compared to Indian Muslims who embrace their minority status so as to preserve their rights in an increasingly Hinduised social order, Alevis reject the minority label out of fear that it will further marginalise them and erode their capacity to play a meaningful role in Turkey's political life. Thus, the innumerable attempts by Alevis to maintain political dialogue with the Sunni mainstream in Turkey reflect a desire to remain politically relevant and preserve the existing political space. In

shifting the terms of the minority discourse away from that of religious difference and numerical disadvantage to that of equal citizenship, Alevis in Turkey are then engaged in interrogating the very nature of the minority.

4. Development Debates

Meliha Altunışık and Derya Göker Akder explore Turkey's way of connecting with the world and its claims to be a "world power" from the late 1980s, until the rise of the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) government in 2002. The end of bipolarity and Turkey's economic successes, have combined to facilitate the recasting of Turkey as global representative of a monolithic "Islamic civilization." In addition, Turkey's commitment to reclaiming its Ottoman past is another policy thrust known as neo-Ottomanism. A comparison with India enables Altunışık and Akder to identify the ways each nation defines its role in a changing world.

Şebnem Köşer Akçapar argues that transnational political and economic activities of diaspora communities usually take place within the framework of the triadic relationship involving diaspora communities, their organizations, homelands, and countries of settlement. Her focus on diaspora engagement of India and Turkey in the United States seeks to argue that lack of historical/colonial connections, high concentration of skilled migrants, strategic partnership models, as well as geographical distance, are factors that have shaped engagement with diasporas in the US differently from those in Europe. However, diaspora institutions and migrant organizations also seek to impact economic and political changes back home. As Turkish and Indian diaspora communities in the US are not monolithic, Akçapar argues that there is a need to recognize the existence of multiple diasporas and develop strategies and policies accordingly to address the specific needs of diaspora members.

The three essays on changing economies and forms of development by Turan, Kadirbeyoğlu and Chattaraj examine different aspects of the economy and examples of development.

Drawing on comparisons, this cluster of essays also seeks to understand how individual conceptions of life, evaluations and aspirations of individuals living in

urban environments of the 21st century may be understood in universal terms. Halil Turan re-visits the philosophical debates on relations between emulation and wealth, virtue and happiness. If Bernard Mandeville had argued in *The Fable of the Bees*, that virtue and prosperity are antagonistic, perceiving pride or vanity as the spur for industry and wealth accumulation, David Hume and Adam Smith were reluctant to identify "vice" as a chief incentive, arguing that "passion" played the major role. Turan reviews the potential for economic growth of India and Turkey with reference to the arguments of these thinkers as well as those of Amartya Sen. He asks if freedom and capability are primary indicators and constitutive of development.

A political economy that conceives the human being as guided by self-interest in all of his/her practices, presupposes an ethics that takes egoism as a power which needs to be tempered so as to benefit society by contributing to its welfare: this explains why "industriousness," "frugality," "perseverance," "dexterity" were brought to the fore as "virtues" by philosophers who thought that people are motivated to work and strive to be enterprising owing to their will to be appreciated for their power to purchase (the labour of others), or at least for fear of being looked down upon if they lack such power. Hence, "pride" or "vanity" was seen as the basic egoistic motive that could (and, apparently, ought to) be employed for the good of society, in that it led to an increase in the quantity and improvement in the quality of labour in production and services.

In this sense, do contemporary market economies in states of growth therefore bear some resemblance to 18th century Britain at least in the psychology of human beings participating in economic relations as workers or entrepreneurs? It is generally argued that individuals are becoming more and more egoistic, that the opening of borders to foreign capital makes the economy grow, but degrades human values such as friendship and solidarity in creating an environment of relentless competition. Hence, "one-upmanship," a conception brought to the fore by the late Zygmunt Bauman, can be seen as marking the spirit of all societies affected by "globalization" (Bauman 2013).

Developmentalism was the leading ideology for both India and Turkey since the early years of their modern histories. Environmental issues, in the meantime, fell into

oblivion until populations began to be affected by mega projects necessitated by industrialization. Zeynep Kadirbeyoğlu makes a comparison of dam building in India and Turkey. Contextualizing her arguments within debates on the construction of large dams, she examines two dam projects—Sardar Sarovar Project of India and Ilısu of Turkey. Since both projects were severely challenged by national and international civil society movements, Kadirbeyoğlu compares these experiences under the following heads: democracy and its context, independent media, access to transnational networks, and the availability of state resources, irrespective of international funding.

5. Claiming the City

The fast-growing economies of India and Turkey with large and expanding informal sectors, prompts Durba Chattaraj to explore the implications of casual vending on the streets of Calcutta and Istanbul. Part of the informal or unregulated economy, such trading often violates state regulations. Chattaraj develops a normative argument for the ethics of informal vending. She argues that despite illegality, the process benefits the poor as well as the consumers—the publics. The density of street vendors as an inescapable part of public space contributes to distinct imaginaries of these cities.

Migrants and workers are often bearers of vibrant counter-imaginaries of the city, citizenship and democracy. The final two essays seek to understand how people claim the space of the city as well as reimagine cityscapes. They touch on several interlinked themes about city planning, people's participation, civil society and examples of self-governance, in addition to alternative social imaginaries that have inspired people's movements.

Kushanava Choudhury suggests that discourses about making Delhi "a world-class city" and Mumbai "like Shanghai" spur fantasies of highways and shopping malls. Such imaginaries are divested of the pleasures arising from the diversity that produces urban idioms and new forms of comportment and mentality. He draws on Istanbul to imagine an alternate urban future, evoking Socrates' (and Plato's) understanding of the link between the polis, politics and the good life. Since Istanbul's citizens

articulate a way of being attuned to the pleasures of being in public, and of being a public, he argues that this is worth fighting for.

The last essay by Ceren Ergenç contributes to the literature on new activism of middle classes. The year that the AAP in India (the Common Man's Party) entered electoral politics, urban middle classes in Turkey occupied the streets, demanding public control over neoliberal urban regeneration policies. Turkey's Gezi Movement gave rise to neighbourhood forums but did not evolve into a political party. To explain these divergent outcomes, Ergenç examines the socioeconomic, institutional and ideological background of the middle classes, demonstrating how the decentralized Indian state's policies facilitate political activism, while Turkey's middle classes remain organizationally dispersed.