South-South perspectives

Expelling and receiving scholars
Recurring purges at universities and the emergence of alternative hubs for knowledge production in Turkey

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The at-risk academics' movement both inside and outside of Turkey is not a well told history. Since the beginning of the higher education system's modernization in the nineteenth century in the Ottoman Empire, educational reforms have been followed by purges of progressive scholars from universities. The consequential authoritarian interventions in universities were presented as higher education reforms by the authorities, and unfortunately, the majority of those reforms did not improve the quality of the educational system and facilities and the scientific knowledge production. Rather, they were instrumentalized to exclude liberal, progressive, or dissident scholars who did not conform to the mainstream ideology of the regime.

This chapter will follow this spiral of purges and forced replacements of scholars from the late Ottoman period to contemporary Turkey. How this cyclical model of "forced mobility" of actors in higher education shaped higher education in Turkey, as well as the repercussions and ramifications of this "academic mobility" on Turkish higher education in the core values of higher education, including institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and social responsibility of scholars to society, will be discussed accordingly. This chapter begins with a description of the first attempts at higher education reform in 1869, followed by the radical interruption in 1933 and consecutive military coups that changed the university system and repeatedly pushed the dissident scholars and critical knowledge outside of the academic system. At the end of this chapter, I discuss the specific features of academic mobility in Turkey today, as Turkey has not only become a country that pushes critical scholars out, but also has become, at the same time, a country that receives

at-risk scholars from other countries, especially Syria. The limited inclusion of refugee scholars from Syria in the Turkish higher education system is addressed together with the alternative knowledge production hubs created after the massive purge of 2016.

First waves of discharges from universities: Late Ottoman Empire and the Early Republic

The history of higher education in the Ottoman period dates back to the Tanzimat period as a part of the modernization attempts of the Ottoman Empire. The first institution of higher education, known as the *Darülfünun*[1] opened in 1863 and closed after two years. The second Darülfünun opened in 1869 and closed in 1871. Finally, the third, *Darülfünunu Sultani*, which provided diplomas in engineering and law, closed in 1882 (Dölen, 2008).

The Regulation of Public Education Law (*Maarif-i Umumiye Nizamnamesi*) in 1869 implemented a relatively secular education system; however, the enforcement of this law took more than 10 years. The proposal of the Darülfünun provoked strong protests by the religious schools (*Madrasas*) and religious circles (Ege & Hagemann, 2012).

As a result of conservative protests in 1870, the first purge of progressive academics from the Darülfünun occurred (Hatiboğlu, 2000). In 1909, the first large-scale elimination of the Darülfünun began when a total of 185 professors were expelled from the university after the merger of civil and military medical schools (Bahadır, 2007). The Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*) already had strong military relations with Germany, and it wanted to improve the educational system in line with the German system (Ege & Hagemann, 2012). In 1915, the Minister of Education (*Maarif Nâzırı*), Şükrü Bey, invited 20 scholars from Germany, though the German scientists were not welcomed by their Francophone Turkish colleagues (Dölen, 2008). During this period, many students were sent to Europe, especially to Germany, and their visions of a Humboldtian university shaped the Darülfünun upon their return. From 1915 to 1918, the plan to open an "Institute

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1   According to the Encyclopedia of Islam, the name Darülfünun (*Dār al-Fünūn*), translates to the House of Science and is preferred to denote the modern university and to differentiate it from the madrasas which taught *ulum* (traditional sciences). Ege and Hagemann (2012) used House of Knowledge as translations of Darülfunun.

of German Education" did not materialize, and the German professors were forced to leave following the Armistice of Montrose (Dölen, 2010c). After their departure, the German scholars' effects on the Darülfünun disappeared very quickly. The influence of France on the Turkish education system increased at this time, and the number of invited French professors consistently increased (Dölen, 2010c).

Shortly after the proclamation of the republic in 1923, public and political debate heavily stressed the need for educational reforms to support the goals of the newly established republic. In 1924, the famous US philosopher and pedagogue John Dewey was invited to Turkey to investigate and improve Turkey's higher education system. In his report, among other things, he recommended sending successful students abroad (Yanardağ, 2017). In 1924, the Darülfünun achieved institutional autonomy, but scrutiny of the quality of education and the criticisms among the conservative circles weakened this autonomy. In 1926, French professors were invited to the science faculty to help improve its higher education system. By virtue of cultural exchange agreements with France, the first group of French professors started to work as chairs of mathematics, physics, and electro-mechanics, among other disciplines (Kadıoğlu, 2004).

The inquiry regarding the quality of the education continued, and critical columnists, intellectuals, and parliamentarians questioned the ability of the Darülfünun to nurture the young generations of the new republic. Some of these criticisms were contradictory to each other, while some groups accused the Darülfünun of not being progressive enough and lagging behind the revolutionary aspirations of the new republic; other groups, such as the intellectuals of *Kadro* magazine[2] criticized the Darülfünun as being too liberal. Meanwhile, administrators were defending themselves for being the followers and protectors of the revolution (Mazıcı, 1995). From these critiques, two main lines of criticism developed. One asserted that the Darülfünun was not capable of producing useful knowledge for fulfilling the people's needs. The other accused the institutions of being irresponsive to the revolution (Katoğlu, 2007). Ege and Haggeman (2012) argued that "[i]t

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2   *Kadro* was an influential yet short-lived Kemalist political magazine. *Kadro* stressed the notions of anti-imperialism, independence, anti-liberalism, and statism (state control of the economy) in order to integrate itself into the Kemalist movement. According to Tanıl Bora (2017), it expected Kemalizm to become the force that awakened the East against imperialism.

seems that the decision to abolish the university had been taken before any scientific justification of the necessity for abolition had been advanced. At the ideological level, the condemnation of Darülfünun seems to have preceded any justification of the condemnation" (p. 953).

While the republican press (such as the *Kadro* magazine and *Cumhuriyet* newspaper) accused the Darülfünun professors of not defending the interest of the nation and not supporting the revolution, after several heated debates took place at the Grand National Assembly on the budget and organization of the Darülfünun, Professor Albert Malche, a professor of pedagogy at Geneva University, was invited to İstanbul to draft a detailed report on Turkish higher education in 1932 (Kadıoğlu, 2004; Tekeli, 2019). According to Dölen (2010c), Malche's first report was translated from French and carefully studied by President Atatürk and a group of senior officials. However, they decided to make radical changes in the educational system, and they abandoned Malche's report. Furthermore, Dölen (2010a) noted, Dr. Reşat Galip[3] was appointed Minister of Education on September 19, 1932 (Dölen, 2010a, p. 84). Later, Malche's second visit led to his active involvement in the Darülfünun reform of 1933. His original report on higher education had never been fully shared with the public until 1939, yet he was held accountable for the difficulties in implementing the reforms (Dölen, 2010a).

When Dr. Reşit Galip gave a lengthy statement to The Anadolu Agency of University Reform, he summarized Malche's report and criticized some professors and lecturers there. He argued that some professors prioritized their personal business operations and undermined their academic posts, did not publish influential and original scientific research, and engaged in conflicts and oppositions with their colleagues instead of sustaining unity in their ideas and aims (Dölen, 2010a). However, denigrating the purged professors as academically insufficient was not convincing; the majority of

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3   Reşit Galip was a medical doctor and a politician. After his appointment as the Minister of Education in 1932, 92 academics were dismissed from the Darülfunun by a letter he signed in 1933 (Mazıcı, 1995). Reşit Galip emphasized the ideological and political functions of a university and defended state intervention in higher education. He proposed an Institute of Turkish Revolution, where the professors could only be those who belonged to the Turkish race (İnan, 1984). Durgun (2020) argued that "[H]e believed that the most remarkable characteristics of the university reform were that the reform was nationalist and innovative. With this arrangement, an academy at the disposal and service of politics was started" (p. 5).

the 150[4] expelled professors were able to speak and publish in several Western languages, and many of them had international publications to their credit, including monographs and articles (Mazıcı, 1995). The academic qualifications of the expelled scholars were not taken into account during the reform, and personal relations, animosities, and ideological positions were the real reasoning behind the firing and hiring of professors of the late Darülfünun (Dölen, 2010a), and this pattern was reiterated many times after this. While Özatalay (2020) has explained the purge in 1933 as a"transition from a liberal to a dirigiste economy in the wake of the Great Depression," this "transition found its ideological counterpart in a sweeping anti-liberal purge at the Darülfünun" (p. 2). Mazıcı (1995), in contrast, argued that the political ideology of *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (CHP; Republican People's Party) from 1923–1945 was never oriented toward liberalism and that with the consolidation of the party-state, CHP rule eradicated any individual or organizational initiative that contradicted the official ideology.

Timur (2000) called the emergent university a product of a paradoxical period. While the Kemalist regime was becoming increasingly nationalistic, a trend influenced by similar shifts in Italy and Germany, the modernization of the university had become imperative. The void created by the expelled scholars was filled with expelled scientists with Jewish family backgrounds from Germany after the release of *Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums* (Reestablished Civil Service Law), on January 30, 1933. A total of 190 persecuted scientists came to Turkey to teach at Istanbul University and modernize the newly established higher education program (Reisman, 2007; Reisman & Capar, 2007, see also Seyhan in this volume).

Integration of the foreign professors into the new university was not effortless. In his memoirs, Ernst Hirsch (1985) spoke of the lack of transparency in the secularization of the state, which was responsible for misunderstandings, tensions, and conflicts. Even though the first 10 years of İstanbul University (1933–1943) has been called its *golden age*,[5] foreign

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4   There is a disagreement on the number of expelled professors. According to Hatiboğlu (2000), 157 of 240 professors were expelled, while Mazıcı (1995) asserted that 92 of 151 Darülfünun professors were expelled.

5   In multiple interviews conducted with the alumni of İstanbul University, the alumni referred to this first decade as "the golden age." In those interviews, this period was described as the epitome of a scientific university that has never been achieved again. The glory was attributed to Atatürk's visions and the presence of German professors (see Dölen, 2010b).

professors were criticized for not working hard enough to raise young Turkish scientists and create a scientific tradition during their tenure (see Dölen 2010b). Moreover, during the first 10 years, the income differences between foreign and Turkish professors caused bitterness, and the foreign professors faced procedural issues in their retirement that were never resolved (Dölen, 2010b; Hatiboğlu, 2000).

By the latter the part of 1930, nationalism, pan-Turkism, and pan-Turanism had become the dominant ideologies of the Turkish state. Pan-Turkism reached its peak at the beginning of 1940s, and the idea of the unity of Turks escalated with the attack of Nazi Germany on the USSR. The nationalist groups did not mind sharing their admiration of Hitler in Turkish newspapers (Bora, 2017). In 1941, a pan-Turkist committee was founded with the encouragement of Germany, and pan-Turkist parliamentarians were invited to join the cabinet (Zürcher, 2000). According to Dölen (2010c), under the given circumstances, even the slightest democratic demands, criticisms of racism, or liberal thoughts were stigmatized as communist propaganda.

Throughout the 1930s, single party regimes, such as Fascist Italy, served as alluring models, while communism, socialism, democracy, or liberalism had been discredited, though for varied reasons, by Kemalist elites (Ahmad, 1993). After the first opposition party, the Free Republican Party, which was founded upon President Kemal Atatürk's request, dissolved itself (Başaran İnce, 2015), the Republican People's Party banned all cultural and social organizations that existed following the Committee of Union and Progress Period (such as *Türk Ocakları* [Turkish Hearths], Turkish Women's Union, Women's Organization, Masonic Lodge, and liberal-socialist newspapers) (Zürcher, 2000). Finally, it was declared in the 4th Grand Congress of the Republican People's Party in 1935 that the Republic of Turkey was the first party state (Koçak, 2013). This ideological frame was not only pursued by the government and the ruling elite, but also by the academics remaining at the university after the purge in 1933. The intellectuals of the era were mobilized to spread the Kemalist ideology, especially their "modern, secular, independent Turkey imaginations" via the press and educational institutions (Zürcher, 2017, p. 182).

The second wave of purges from universities: From 1948 to 1980

Kemalism of the 1930s was called "the third period" by Bozarslan (2006, p. 32) and described as the period of becoming an autonomous ideology, encompassing six principles: secularism, nationalism, republicanism, revolutionism, étatism, and populism. After the death of Atatürk in 1938, İsmet İnönü was made the permanent party chairman and became the millî şef (national leader). In the second half of the 1940s, discontent with the economic measures that targeted the Republican People's Party's and external pressures for democratization pushed the government to allow a certain degree of liberalization (Zürcher, 2017). The postwar years were marked by the liberalization of political life, which was characterized by allowing the formation of new political parties, universal suffrage, and direct elections (Yapp & Dewdney, n.d.).

The country continued to invest in education, and the literacy rate increased incrementally (Taeuber, 1958). Prior to the new wave of purges in 1948, two new universities, Ankara University and Istanbul Technical University, were established. In 1946, universities were granted institutional autonomy. Additionally, their administrative structure and university organization were established by University Law Number 4936 (Dölen, 2010c).

Nevertheless, in the early 1940s, several scholars were arrested for their scholarly work. Scholars of Ankara University's Faculty of Languages, History, and Geography (*Ankara Üniversitesi, Dil, Tarih ve Coğrafya Fakültesi*, DTCF), including Pertev Naili Boratav, Adnan Cemgil, and Behice Boran, published several articles on fascism, freedom, and democracy in the new *Adımlar* magazine and led a vocal critique of the government (Koçak, 2007). Muzaffer Başoğlu (Sherif) published his book entitled *Irk Psikolojisi* (*Race Psychology*) in 1943 and several articles on racism and psychology. He criticized the use of Nazi inspired racial doctrines such as Turanism by Turkish nationalists and the racist idea of superior races, and the book created discontent and frustration among the racist groups. Başoğlu was arrested in 1944 with other antifascist faculty and charged with "actions inimical to the national interest" (Trotter, 1985 cited in Rusell, 2016, p. 341) and held in solitary confinement for 40 days (Russell, 2016). He later moved to the United States and continued his career at Princeton, Yale, and the University of Oklahoma, respectively. He retired from Pennsylvania State University (University Park, PA) in the 1980s (Batur, 2017).

During this time of conflict, professors Pertev Naili Boratav, Behice Boran, Niyazi Berkes, and Mediha Berkes of DTCF; five German refugee professors, Benno Landsberger, Hans Gustav Güterbock, Wolfram Eberhard, Walter Ruben, and Tibor Halasi-Kun of Ankara University; and Sadrettin Celâl Antel of İstanbul University were all picked as targets of a witch hunt initiated by right-wing groups and were pursued by the government. German professors were accused of supporting leftist faculty and of opposing racism (Dölen, 2010c). In the first expulsion attempt, the Board of Education investigated Boratav, Başoğlu, Boran, and Berkes. The dean of the DTCF authored a secret note that provided the Board of Education with the names of the professors who authored articles for the left-leaning *Görüşler Dergisi* (Görüşler Journal).[6] After an initial futile attempt, the Ankara University Senate opened an investigation. One year after that, even though the Senate decided to dismiss those professors, they applied for an appeal at the Interuniversity Council, and the Council overturned the initial verdict. However, right-wing politicians, including Prime Minister Hasan Saka, pushed for a criminal lawsuit despite all three professors being acquitted of any charges. To terminate this legal battle, the CHP government ultimately canceled the professors' tenure and expelled them from Ankara University in 1948 (Ak, 2015; Çetik, 2008; Dölen, 2010c; Öztürkmen, 2005). In addition to Boran, Boratav, Berker, and Sertel, some German professors were also fired, allegedly due to budget shortages (Hatiboğlu, 2000; Koçak, 2013). Meanwhile, professors Benno Landsberger, Hans Gustav Güterbock, Wolfram Eberhard, Walter Ruben, Georg Rohde, and Tibor Halasi-Kun[7] were named as antifascist scholars (Dölen, 2010c).

When speaking of their purge in 1948, Naili Pertev Boratav shared the following anecdote:

> In those times, there were protests against us in the faculty, calling for our deportation. This was also the time when the faculty assembly decided against us. One of those days I came across Landsberger, he was also a member of the faculty assembly. I told him, in the complaint, "Professor what has happened to us recently may also happen to you one day." And he responded, "What shall we do? There were strong charges against you."

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6   Mumcu, U. (1990) 40'ların Cadı Kazanı, Tekin Yayınevi, (pp. 104–105) as cited in Dölen, 2010c.

7   Ultimately, Georg Rohde was discharged instead of Tibor Halasi-Kunt, and the reason for the discharge of those five foreign professors was never clarified (Dölen, 2010c).

Nevertheless, together with us, 25 émigré professors, including Landsberger and Güterbock were also deported.[8]

According to the university law passed in 1946, only public servants could apply for the associate professorship (habilitation) exam. This meant that only Turkish nationals could be candidates for these positions, thereby obstructing the German professors' career growth in favor of the nationalist ideology of the state (Hatiboğlu, 2000). Even though German professors had been allowed to apply for Turkish nationality, this decision had many downsides, including losing 75% of their salaries (Hatiboğlu, 2000). Anti-Semitic sentiment in Turkey fostered by German propaganda and Pan-Turkism, conflicted with Turkish and pro-Nazi German academics as well as with the Turkish government, and a hostile political environment in Turkey influenced the departure of German professors to America and Europe in the 1940s, once their work contracts were terminated or ended, or when they found new opportunities (Tomenendal et al., 2010).

At the end of the one-party rule, the Democrat Party (DP), which was the third legal oppositional party as well as the first party to form a government, de-seated the Republican People's Party (formerly known as the People's Party) by winning the 1950 national elections. In the first years of the DP, the government had positive relations with the universities. However, this fragile balance started to weaken when the DP introduced a change to the University Law which criminalized professors' political activities and comments (Dölen, 2010c). Their regulations were a direct threat to university autonomy, and the deposal of the Dean of the Faculty of Political Science, Turhan Feyzioğlu, caused substantial discontent among academics and intellectuals (Dölen, 2010c; Hatiboğlu, 2000). However, the ephemeral reign of the DP was terminated on May 27, 1960[9] by the military's National Unity Committee, and the military regime lasted for the next 18 months. Strangely, the new revolutionary *zeitgeist* of the regime hit the universities first when the National

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8   Çetik. M. (1998). 1948 DTCF Tasfiyesi ve P.N. Boratav'ın Müdafaası [The 1948 purge in DTCF and the defense of P.N.Boratav], Üniversitede Cadı Kazanı, p.198, as cited in Tomenendal et al., 2010.

9   The 1960 Turkish coup d'état was the first, but not the last military coup in the Turkish Republic. After the coup, 592 Democrat Party members were put on trial in the military courts and three of them, Adnan Menderes (Prime Minister), Fatin Rüştü Zorlu (Minister of Foreign Affairs), and Hasan Polatkan (Minister of Treasury) were executed (Özdemir, 2007).

Unity Committee changed the University Law again and dismissed 147 academics from universities (Dölen, 2010c; Timur, 2000). Ironically, some of the dismissed professors and professors-in-ordinary were among the new faculty hired at İstanbul University after the 1933 purge (Dölen, 2010c).

Third wave of purges after the 1980 coup and the privatization of higher education

After the first and second waves of purges in 1933 and 1960, respectively, another massive expulsion from universities occurred after the 1980 coup d'état. Some research assistants and lecturers were dismissed following the 1971 military coup, yet the purge was relatively minor.

The end of the 1970s was marked by polarization and frustration of the Turkish people and escalated the economic and political instability of the country. Terror attacks targeted left-leaning academics and intellectuals as well as Alevis, a minority among the Sunni majority, often denounced as "communists" by the right-wing Grey Wolves[10] (Ahmad, 1993).

On September 12, 1980, armed forces seized political power, dissolved the parliament, unseated the cabinet, rescinded immunity of the members of the parliament, and suspended all political parties and two trade unions (Zürcher, 2000). Not immediately, surprisingly, the martial administration started to revise the University Law, and they established the Council of Higher Education (CoHE, in Turkish, its acronym is YÖK) in a capacity defined by Articles 130 and 131 of the 1982 constitution in order to control the universities. "Universities were thus being disciplined for not addressing terror and violence, and not keeping out of political struggles" (Güvenç, 1990, p. 90).

The military regime utilized multiple methods for their purge. They reorganized the old universities and opened new ones. They forced the

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10   The youth organization of the Nationalist Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi) officially called the Hearths of Ideal (Ülkü Ocakları) and the members named themselves Greys Wolves. They started threatening leftist students, teachers, publicists, and booksellers. "The Grey Wolves received paramilitary training in specially designed camps and, like Hitler's SS, their mission was to conquer the streets (and the campuses) on the left" (Zürcher, 2017, p. 260).

faculty to work on a rotational system.[11] Scholars who resisted the rotational system and scholars who were known as communists, or the ones targeted in personal conflicts of interest, were dismissed by Martial Law No. 1402, which was established in the aftermath of the military coup. Some of the academic personnel were dismissed by the rector's orders, while others were either banished or threatened to be purged by means of this law (Dölen, 2010c; Güvenç, 1990). Additionally, some professors resigned to protest the situation (Hatiboğlu, 2000) or resigned because of the mobbing of the university administrations and colleagues (Dölen, 2010c). According to Dölen (2010c), we do not know the exact number of purged academics since some of them refused to return to the universities even after the State Council decisions to allow their return. Hatiboğlu posited that the number of purged academics might have ranged from 1,200 to 1,300.

Universities were restructured once again by Higher Education Law No. 2457. First of all, the new law organized every education institute (including institutes and vocational schools regulated by the Ministry of Education) under the YÖK, centralized the educational system (Birler, 2012), and revoked the universities' autonomy once again. The law mandated the appointment of administrative personnel, such as rectors, deans, and department chairs, instead of elections and regulations of academic promotions by the YÖK. Higher education was also restructured to serve the needs of the rising private sector. A two-tier system was introduced, and a few top-ranking universities started to instruct in English to support the newly emerging "managerial and technocratic class" (Ahmad, 1993, p. 210).

Finally, with the new regulation, the establishment of the nonprofit foundation universities was enabled, and higher education fees were introduced even for the public universities (Katoğlu, 2007). In the 1990s, the number of private universities in Turkey started to increase rapidly.[12] In fact, since 1992, 74 private universities have opened in Turkey. The increase of the foundation of universities after 2002 caused an increase

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11   It was a mandatory system to force academics from established universities at the center to new universities at the periphery. These rotations were a punishment of the dissident academics rather than an opportunity to improve the quality of the education in newly established universities (Versan, 1989).

12   According to the statistics provided by YÖK, there were 74 private/foundation universities, 129 state universities, and four private vocational schools in Turkey by 2020 (see https://www.yok.gov.tr/universiteler/universitelerimiz).

in the commodification of the universities, and they also began to be dispersed to smaller cities, such as Gaziantep, Kayseri, Konya, Trabzon, Samsun, Bursa, and Antalya (Birler, 2012). Higher education's marketization alters "universities into corporations, faculties into departments, university presidents into managers, and academicians into workers" wrote Önal (2012, p. 136). Vatansever and Yalçın (2015) described this academic milieu as a toxic environment that permeates insecure and trivialized intellectual production and creates involuntarily nomadic and precarious academics who have been threatened with unemployment and dismissals by the administeration after the intense privatization of higher education. As Biner (2019) described, "[W]ith the ascension of AKP rule in 2002, neoliberal policies aggressively and rapidly penetrated the system of higher education, and Erdoğan set about imposing stricter control over the YÖK and the universities" (p. 20). Vatansever (2018) highlighted this impermeable knot of authoritarianization and privatization as follows: "the ongoing witch-hunt in the universities adds a political dimension to the hitherto economic precarization of the academic labor force, and should be seen as part of a wider, distinctly neo-liberal attempt on the part of the state to eradicate rational agency. By eliminating qualified oppositional cadres en masse on false accusations, the government is implementing a systematic deinstitutionalization of intellectual production" (p. 5).

The last wave of discharges from universities: the Peace Petition and failed coup attempt of July 2016

Turkish higher education did not fully recover from the damage created by the junta's regime that was established after the 1980 military coup. Universities could not attain institutional autonomy or achieve freedom to teach and research fully, and during the 1980s, the YÖK shaped academic life in Turkey. Since the relatively quiet years of the 1990s and 2000s, sporadic attacks on

individual scholars[13] or certain research topics[14] have escalated and been extended to all higher education (Baser et al., 2017).

A couple of months before the coup attempt in July 2016, a group of academics calling themselves Academics for Peace (AfP) released an open letter to the Turkish state demanding that they stop using violence and breaching human rights in the Kurdish regions of Turkey. They also demanded that they resume peace negations. When the petition entitled "We will not be a party to this crime!" was shared with the public, the initial signatures totaled 1,128, with academics inside and outside of Turkey signing it. President Erdoğan reacted ferociously upon its release, and he accused the academics of treason and labeled the signatories as "ignorant" and "so-called intellectuals" and of being a "fifth column" and "dark."[15] The YÖK immediately responded to Erdoğan's call on the judiciary and university administrations by issuing a statement that claimed that the Peace Petition could not be accepted as a protected exercise of academic freedom.[16] Immediately following this, 30 academics were detained, their houses were raided by anti-terror police, and the number of detentions increased to 70 (Abbas & Zalta, 2017). Eighty-nine academics were dismissed with or without disciplinary investigations; some academics faced disciplinary actions including warnings, demotions, reprimands, or suspensions (Abbas & Zalta 2017; Baser et al., 2017).

Not surprisingly, nationalist and conservative media were encouraged by the president's intimidating speech, and they too targeted the academics. Unfortunately, some of the university senates and chancellors jumped on the bandwagon with the media, and they issued several statements denouncing their colleagues as "supporters of terrorism," "slanderous," "so-called academics," or "vile" (Sözeri, 2016; Tekin, 2019).

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13   Such as İsmail Beşikçi, a sociologist who studied the Kurdish question and has been imprisoned for 17 years, or Büşra Ersanlı, an eminent political scientist who gave lectures at the academy of BDP, the Kurdish political party at the time, who was imprisoned for nine months in 2011.

14   Such as the Armenian genocide, the Dersim massacre, or the Kurdish question.

15   See https://bianet.org/bianet/ifade-ozgurlugu/171150-erdogan-dan-akademisyenlere-d aga-ciksinlar-veya-hendek-kazsinlar?bia_source=facebook&utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_ medium=facebook

16   Very unexpectedly after the defamation campaign started, almost 1,000 academics signed the petition, and the total number exceeded 2,000 (https://barisicinakademisy enler.net/node/1).

Eight hundred and twenty-two academics have stood trial since December 5, 2017. Of the 108 academics whose cases were concluded, all were sentenced to serve from 1 year and 3 months to 3 years in prison. Twelve were convicted. By January 2021, there were still 91 ongoing trials despite the Constitutional Court's decision that the penalization of Academics for Peace on charges of "propagandizing for a terrorist organization" violated their freedom of expression. Even though more than 100 academics were dismissed, forced to resign, or retired because of signing the Peace Petition, the real purge occurred after the July 2016 coup attempt.

The consecutive statuary decrees caused permanent changes to the institutions, including universities (TİHV Akademi, 2018). They also destroyed what remained of universities' institutional autonomy (Taştan et al., 2020). During this prolonged state of emergency, the government abolished the rectorate elections, and the president licensed himself to appoint the rectors. Considering the current political climate of the country, rectorate appointments are not expected to reflect the academic merit[17] of the candidates or their administrative expertise. Rather, appointments are more so based on the degree of ideological agreement with the government. Similarly, universities' authority to conduct disciplinary procedures with their academic staff has been delegated to the Chairperson of the Council of Higher Education. According to the 2016–2017 report of the Science Academy, "These new disciplinary regulations are in continuation of the repressive tradition established in our country in 1980. On the one hand, universities' power to perform disciplinary investigations as independent legal entities is partially transferred to the Council of Higher Education, on the other hand, academics' freedom of expression is limited in an unconstitutional manner" (The Science Academy, 2017, p. 10).

With the consecutive statuary decrees, in addition to thousands of civil servants such as teachers, nurses, doctors, and technicians, 1,427 administrative personnel, and 6,081 academics (2,493 from social sciences

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17   In January 2021, President Erdoğan appointed Professor Melih Bulu as a rector of one of Turkey's most renowned institute, Boğaziçi University. The appointed rector was accused of plagiarism (https://scienceintegritydigest.com/2021/01/07/newly-appointe d-bogazici-university-rector-accused-of-plagiarism/), and his merits were questioned widely by academics and students of the university (https://m.bianet.org/english/hum an-rights/238559-academics-call-on-appointed-rector-to-resign-keep-your-hands-off-my-student).

and humanities, 1,886 from health sciences, and 828 from engineering departments, 81 from sports and arts, and the academic fields of 98 academics that were not mentioned) were dismissed from universities without explanation or due process of law (TİHV Akademi, 2018). All 1,576 deans from all public and private universities were obliged to resign from their posts (Aydın et al., 2021) and public servants including the academics were not allowed to travel abroad in the following days of the coup attempt and later they were only allowed to travel with a certificate of clearance from their working institutions until November 15, 2016. Meanwhile, students also suffered from decree laws. While 300 graduate students studying abroad were expelled and lost their scholarships, 15 universities were closed (TİHV Akademi, 2018), and students were compelled to register at other universities without an informed decision and mostly with a status of "special student," some having to study in segregated classes (Namer et al., 2018).

Even though this last in the wave of purges has been the most extensive one, which affected thousands of academics and students, like the previous ones, this purge was also caused by the state's desire to implement its political (as well as social and economic) agenda to consolidate its domination and influence over higher education. This intervention has gravely damaged the remaining autonomy of the higher education institutions and severely impacted the ability to pursue the scientific and academic endeavors of the scholars.

Syrian (refugee) scholars in Turkey

The failed coup attempt created an immense opportunity to restructure the Turkish higher education system and purge the thousands of undesirable academics from the universities. Some of the purged academics left Turkey to work in foreign universities. Even though it is difficult to ascertain the exact number of exiled academics from Turkey since 2016, Turkish scholars constitute the largest group of applicants to the SAR network, and from January 2016 to October 2019, SAR received more than 1,000 applications from Turkey.[18] Several initiatives including the global Scholar Rescue Fund, the Philipp Schwartz Initiative of the Alexander von Humboldt

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18   See https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/european-alliance-for-academics-at-risk-to-be-based-out-of-maynooth-university-1.4049383

Foundation in Germany, Norwegian institutions through the Students at Risk program (Tekdemir et al., 2018), Academy in Exile Fellowship Program in Germany, Academic Freedom Program of the Einstein Foundation Berlin, and Programme d'aide à l'Accueil en Urgence des Scientifiques en Exil (National program for the urgent aid and reception of scientists in exile, PAUSE) in France, among other programs, host the growing number of Turkish scholars at risk.

While Turkish universities were losing thousands of academics, refugee academics and students primarily from Syria were struggling to find themselves an opportunity to continue their research and education in Turkey. According to the statistics collected by the YÖK, by 2017, 392 Syrian academics (including professors, associate and assistant professors, lecturers, research and teaching assistants, and educational planners) were employed in Turkish higher education institutions. This number constituted 14% of all foreign academic personnel but only 0.2% of the total number of academics (Erdoğan et al., 2017).

In 2018, a group of professors, most of whom were the rectors of the Turkish universities, in cooperation with the YÖK and under the patronage of the president, started a project entitled the Preservation of Academic Heritage in the Middle East Project. On their webpage,[19] they introduced the project as follows:

> This project was prepared to support the dreams of the students and scientists, who were forced to flee their countries due to war conditions, in order to ensure that they resume their academic lives, and to make their voices heard.
> Talking about the incomplete academic lives and destroyed science centers of the Middle East on different sides of the world and keeping them alive is an academic heritage that will be passed on to the next generations.
> What is lost does not belong only to the heritage of the Middle East but to all humanity as well. The maintenance of scientific environment in the Middle East by promoting scientists and students will ensure the common future of humanity and the reconstruction of the ruined regions.

Since the project started in 2018, its participants have appeared mainly on pro-government mediums, such as the Turkish state-run Yunus Emre

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19   See http://www.akademikmiras.org

Institute in London.[20] The project panels co-organized by the YÖK at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) University of London, and the University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany were protested by scholars and activists, and the panel at SOAS was subsequently cancelled.[21] The speakers of those panels were rectors and deans of the Turkish universities as well as members of YÖK, politicians, and representatives of pro-government foundations. Refugee scholars were not provided an opportunity to speak on their own behalf and raise their voices.

On the web page of this project, short videos of refugee students and scholars disclosing their experiences as well as their "gratitude to Turkey,"[22] which were produced with dramatic cinematography were shared. On this web page, stakeholders did not publish any road map or tangible plan for integrating refugee scholars and students into the higher education system in Turkey; instead, they seemed to prepare propaganda materials that attempted to restore the compromised reputation of the Turkish educational system and the YÖK.

While the Preservation of Academic Heritage in the Middle East Project attempted to promote itself at international events, Syrian academics experienced several difficulties in Turkey, including a lack of professional opportunities, economic hardships, and discrimination (see Ghazzoul in this volume). In a study conducted by a team of researchers from the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education and Syrian Co-researchers published by the Council for At-Risk Academics (CARA), researchers interviewed nineteen displaced male academics residing in Turkey at the time of the research. Some participants reported that they had to teach Arabic, regardless of their academic field, to survive in a foreign country with limited academic job market opportunities. One participant shared his experience:

> Now I am teaching Arabic in [name of the Faculty]. It is not my specialization, but I can get enough money for me and my children. I am refreshing my English and trying to publish in my specialization, and as you know, my job is merely a way to get money. It is like I am beginning again, to be honest." (Interviewee 19) (Dillabough et al., 2019, p. 81)

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20   See https://ahvalnews.com/academics-peace/soas-backs-out-panel-discussion-after-ba cklash-turkish-academics

21   See https://academicboycottofturkey.wordpress.com/news/

22   See https://youtu.be/heYcsZMmDOY

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Parkinson et al. (2020) observed that the refugee academics whom they interviewed in Turkey had difficulty finding jobs related to their academic interests, and sometimes they felt obligated to work outside of academics, mainly in unskilled jobs. Teaching courses outside of their expertise, not having access to scientific resources, and the lack of professional and academic support have made refugee scholars unsettled and frustrated. Correspondingly, more than 80% of Syrian academics employed at Turkish universities have a background in theology or religious studies, and they found more permanent working opportunities at the theology faculties or religious vocational schools. A significant number of Syrian scholars, probably from other disciplines, are assumed to have left Turkey for third countries (Erdoğan et al., 2017). Despite the Turkish government's resistance to collaborating with international actors, there has been support from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), working within the unclear and continuously shifting legal space in Turkey (Watenpaugh et al., 2014). However, Syrian scholars have not been content with the amount of support they have received from international organizations (Abdo, 2015; Parkinson et al., 2020; Watenpaugh et al., 2014). Moreover, neither the quality nor the amount of support refugee academics receive in Turkey has seemed satisfactory to them. The cancelation of work contracts caused Syrian academics to lose their already precarious, low-paid jobs in higher education. McLaughlin and colleagues (2020, p.7) quoted two interviewees: "At one new university, the hopes that working would mean being professionally recognized and legitimated so central to testimonies of professional integrity turned out 'not to be true' (Karam) and 'unfortunately, I also saw the criminals and thieves [in the new HE context]' (Jamal)."

Because they were disconnected from their academic and professional networks, lacked new research collaboration opportunities, and had problems with their legal status (Parkinson et al., 2020; Watenpaugh et al., 2014), in addition to facing extensive discrimination and racism directed toward refugees in Turkey (Doğanay & Çoban Keneş, 2016; Şimşek, 2017), Syrian academics experienced loss of professional and academic career pursuits (Dillabough et al., 2019). The case of Syrian scholars in Turkey well illustrates the spiral of continuous dismissals. While the employment of refugee scholars from Syria is presented by governmental institutions as a humanitarian act to preserve the heritage of the Middle East, these scholars are placed on the periphery of the university. Once again, the Turkish higher educational system pushed a significant number of researchers outside the universities,

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839460894-011 https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access -

and this time not so much as the result of a systematic purge of ideological university reform, but because of disregard or indifference of the government toward a refugee scientist.

Solidarity Academies

Having described the different purges and the half-hearted integration of Syrian refugee scholars, it remains important to observe what happens outside the university. The purges do in fact transform the academic milieu, and the scholars affected by the purges are not only fleeing the country but reorganizing themselves outside the university. While thousands of academics were forced to leave their posts at universities, and the academics who remained in the universities complained about self-censorship and losing their calling for doing research and motivation for research and teaching (Aktas et al., 2019), the critical academic discussions moved to another medium, solidarity academies. Solidarity Academies is an umbrella term used to define several initiatives, such as *Kocaeli Dayanışma Akademisi* (Kocaeli Solidarity Academy, KODA), *İzmir Dayanışma Akademisi* (İzmir Solidarity Academy, İDA), *Ankara Dayanışma Akademisi* (Ankara Solidarity Academy, ADA), *İnsan Hakları Okulu* (The School of Human Rights), and *BirAraDA Dernek* (Association for Science, Art, Education, Research and Solidarity), which create hubs for producing scientific and academic knowledge outside the universities. They were established in many big cities in Turkey, and they have organized public lectures, seminars, summer and winter schools, and workshops. During the pandemic, solidarity academies pursued their activities online like many other associations. Tuğrul and Deniz (2019) described participants of solidarity academies as a core group, a stable group of academics, most of whom were dismissed from their tenure, and other less regular participants, who differ significantly in their backgrounds. The core members are primarily signatories of the Peace Petition, and many of the solidarity academies described themselves as organized horizontally and collaboratively.

Tutkal (2020, p. 5) summarized the aims of the solidarity academies as follows:

> . . . to relate academic knowledge production to the prioritization of peace, nonviolence and justice in the socio-political sphere, to continue such

knowledge production processes in the non-university spheres, and to maintain their relation with the dare-to knowledge that requires courage in producing and sharing knowledge, prioritizing peace vis-a-vis the authoritarian structures [and thus] to produce and share knowledge with reference to equality, freedom, and solidarity that are excluded from the university sites.

Even though they emerged as a response to massive purges following the coup attempt in 2017, the operations, organizations, or focuses of the solidarity academies are not identical to each other (see Özgür in this volume). Each one provided a distinct contribution to the field. For instance, while the Mersin-based *Kültürhane* (Culture House) works as a non-profit social space also functioning as a public library, *Aramızda* defines its mission as "conducting research on gender and gender equality, provision of training activities, and contribution to rising awareness by sharing accumulated knowledge and experience" on their webpage.[23] In addition, TİHV Akademi, which was initiated by the academics purged by the statuary decrees from the three universities in İzmir, focuses mainly on documenting the rights violations experienced by scholars and human rights activists. They publish regular reports and bulletins to cover rights violations. Also, Off-University was established in Berlin by and for persecuted academics, who were dismissed or forced to resign from their jobs or were prosecuted or imprisoned, as well as their colleagues and friends. Off-University primarily aims to provide an opportunity to teach online and earn an income for persecuted academics of the world who can no longer work at a university and are criminalized for their opinions. Erdem and Akın (2019) described each solidarity academy as "conceptually unique and embedded in its own distinct local context" (p. 150). For example, Ankara Street Academy started teaching in Kuğulu Park[24] with a lecture entitled "Hegemony and Counter Hegemony." Unlike other academies, their audience was the people living in the neighborhood, not necessarily university students, and their aim was to offer academic knowledge to the people while choosing the topics relevant to current debates in Turkish society (Aktas et al., 2020).

Mollona and colleagues (2020) explored three popular initiatives: the *Bachilleratos Populares* in Argentina, the Landless Movement in Brazil, and

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23   See https://aramizda.org.tr/index.php/en/main-page/

24   Kuğulu Park is a centrally located public park in the Çankaya district of Ankara, Turkey.

Kampüssüzler in Turkey, and they identified that despite their differences, they are strongly tied to feminist, anti-capitalist, and decolonial struggles. Despite the principal or practical differences among the solidarity academies, Bakırezer and Koçak (2017) pointed out three common dimensions where dismissed academics carry on their efforts: "1) recovering the lost position and return to the university; 2) creation of an alternative and democratic academic organization by restructuring academic institutions and, finally; 3) democratization of the country as the compulsory external political condition in order to have a positive academic environment" (Bakirezer & Koçak, 2017, as cited in Tuğrul & Deniz, 2019, p. 493). Aktoprak (2020, p. 22), a signatory of Peace Petition and a purged academic with a statuary decree, defined the demanding work of the dismissed academics as follows:

> We are now trying to prove that we are "no different from others," that we are still academics and do not need four walls. But this effort is no longer an effort that anchors the past. We are aware that we now need to separate our ties with the university we were purged into to ensure continuity. Not because we get the gate, but because the university is no longer a university under the authoritarian regime. [Separation] is to pursue the university, the academy. But just as the person who went through the colonial experience is not the same, we are no longer the same person, the same scholar [author's translation].

As Erdem and Akın (2019) argued, solidarity academies could benefit from their frustration with the current situation of the education system and support from civil society. For now, nobody knows when and how dismissed academics can return to their universities, or whether they would be willing to return to institutions that purged them and to colleagues who did not defend them. It is also unknown to what extent they would be willing to struggle to change or powerful enough to change the instrumentalization of universities, the less than mediocre research and education quality, and the diminished academic freedom and autonomy.

Conclusion

As Pherali (2020) acknowledged, a "mass displacement of academics places a huge cost on the country of their origin not only in terms of the loss of human capital but also the destruction of the intellectual life of the entire community"

(p. 90). Since the very beginning of the establishment of Turkish universities, academics were excluded from academic knowledge production by forces with political agendas. With every purge, political elites desired to redesign higher education according to their needs. Unfortunately, those restructuring and redesigning efforts have damaged the institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and quality of scientific production and education in Turkish universities. While four Turkish universities had ranked among the top 200 institutions globally in the Times Higher Education's World University Rankings 2014–2015, in 2021, after the purge of thousands of academics and complete destruction of the remaining institutional autonomy and academic freedom, none of the Turkish universities were even ranked in the top 400 in these rankings.[25] While the public and private universities are losing their edge and popularity in the international higher education setting, the transformative role of solidarity academies becomes more visible on a day-to-day basis. They have hosted unorthodox research topics and critical perspectives that are marginalized in mainstream academia, such as the history of labor, resistance, commoning, gender and LGBTIQ, and workplace homicides. Furthermore, since their establishment, members of the solidarity academies have become popular expert speakers at events on academic freedoms, while their documentations are extensively and internationally used by their peers.

Academics in Turkey have endured rights violations and oppression because of their research or their extramural activities since the establishment of higher education in modern Turkey. University reforms that are followed by massive purges (or vice versa) of the critically acclaimed scholars from the universities show a nearly cyclical pattern: in every decade or two, universities suffer from shockwaves of anti-democratic intrusions. The last radical intrusion caused the largest dismissal of the academics and caused irreversible damage to higher education, at least in the short term. However, this time, alternative hubs of knowledge production have flourished, and they have given the long-lost autonomy and academic freedom back to the researchers with limited resources and the dismissed academics pursuing their scientific endeavor and sharing their vast knowledge with people without economic, social, or political barriers.

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25   See https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2021/world-ran king#!/page/0/length/25/locations/TR/sort_by/rank/sort_order/asc/cols/stats

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