

Panel 18: **Politics of Civil War and Humanitarian Response along the Turkish-Syrian Border**

Thursday 17, 16.30-18.45, Aula A8

Convenors: **Murat Çemrek** (Necmettin Erbakan University); **Hüsrev Tabak** (Recep Tayyip Erdogan University)

Discussant: **Alessia Chiriatti** (University for Foreigners of Perugia)

This panel aims to bring together different aspects of and perspectives on the humanitarian and political issues emerged in the two sides of the Turkish-Syrian border in relation to the Syrian civil war. As a complementary step towards contributing to the ever-growing scholarly and intellectual debate on the issue, the panel raises questions regarding the mutually constitutive relationship between Turkish domestic and foreign policies and the Syrian civil war. Within the scope of this relationship, individual papers scrutinizes, for instance, how the Syrian crisis spoiled the peace process between the state and the Kurds in Turkey; how nongovernmental actors in Turkey have implemented humanitarian diplomacy within Syria; or how Turkey, as part of a mission towards being a rising power, dealt with a humanitarian crisis. The panel is expected to shed some critical light and spark scholarly discussions on politics of civil war and humanitarian response from local and regional perspectives.

Paper givers:

- 1) **Özgür Tüfekçi** (Karadeniz Technical University), **Murat Çemrek** (Necmettin Erbakan University), *A Rising Power's Response to a Humanitarian Crisis: Turkey and Syrian Civil War*

Power in international relations is explained in various ways. For instance, Machiavelli uses the term “power” as an ultimate goal for mankind and the state. In his book, “The Prince,” he examines the means and methods of gaining and keeping power. For ages, humans have built their relationships with others on power politics. In this regard, the international system has recently introduced a new type of dialogue by experts who want to draw a certain line between powers. The aim is to categorize powers in order to make each of them remember what their role is in the system. By doing so, the status quo is preserved and the leadership of the U.S. continues, at least in the mind of the people. Through this new type of dialogue, several acronyms have been produced, such as BRICS, MINT, MIST, PINE and MIKT. However, we need to determine several criteria to make a thorough categorisation. In this sense, this paper will try to present various criteria that determine which countries can be counted as rising powers. Besides, as a case study this paper will delve into how Turkey, commonly called as one of the rising powers, has responded to a humanitarian crisis, Syrian Civil war. It is well-known that Turkey is now the largest host of Syrian refugees in the region. In this regard, this paper will also find out whether its response would fulfilled the criteria or not.

2) **Alessia Chiriatti** (University for Foreigners of Perugia), *Turkish (Governmental) Humanitarian Response during the Syrian Crisis*

The ongoing conflict in Syria has created one of the most pressing humanitarian crises in the world. Humanitarian needs continue to rise, population displacements are increasing and an entire generation of children is being exposed to war and violence, increasingly deprived of basic services, education and protection. The European Union and its Member States collectively are leading the international response. More than €5 billion have been mobilized for relief and recovery assistance to Syrians in their country and to refugees and their host communities in neighbouring Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt. Turkey above all is currently hosting more than 2.5 million Syrian refugees, the largest number of Syrian refugees in one country in the world, even during the last summer. The paper has the aim to provide a general overview of the Syrian crisis exploded after the so-called Arab Spring in 2011, particularly from a humanitarian point of view. After this step, the paper will be focused on the Turkish humanitarian response to the Syrian crisis itself, including the initiatives that the EU has created to approach the problem.

3) **Hüsrev Tabak** (Recep Tayyip Erdogan University), *Turkey's Civilian Humanitarian Response and Diplomacy in Syria*

This paper examines the dynamics of and processes by which nongovernmental humanitarian organisations in Turkey have involved in humanitarian diplomacy (more specifically mediation for the release of detained civilians) activities in Syria through negotiating with both regional states (such as Iran) and warring parties within Syria including opposition and Syrian regime. There are several nongovernmental organisations operating in the ground in Syria, yet, IHH stands as the most efficient and influential of organisation as most of the mediatory practices have been carried out by it. The paper accordingly aims to unfold, through a focused examination of the IHH's involvements, the extent of the humanitarian diplomacy activities and the motivations behind such civilian mediatory role and relevant practices. In the paper, the conclusions are drawn based on the interviews conducted with the senior officials from IHH.

4) **Estella Carpi** (Senior Researcher at Trends, Research and Advisory, Abu Dhabi), *Rethinking Border Towns in Times of Neoliberal Humanitarianism*

The nearly five-year old Syrian political crisis has been producing a large number of refugees fleeing into the border towns of Şanlıurfa and Gaziantep (South Turkey). As a consequence, these two urban settings have been reconfigured through new social networks formed by Syrian refugee newcomers, older date Syrian migrants, and citizen residents. In this framework, the sizeable presence of the international humanitarian apparatus assisting the refugees in border towns is changing local consumption cultures and leisure activities. Humanitarianism is here to be interpreted as a neoliberal force transforming local cultures and human geography in states of emergency. In these increasingly hybrid social settings, the transformation of local, international, and refugee socio-cultural practices – traditions, habits, and public behavioral codes – is under-researched while able to unearth how the

urban patterns of Şanlıurfa and Gaziantep are presently changing. The qualitative exploration of fluid leisure and consumption cultures in international humanitarian settings will therefore be explored in order to elucidate institutional and human components of border urban change. Rather than focusing on the risks, the insecurity, and the violence following the refugee influx in Turkey, or the geopolitical order produced by humanitarian interventions - which are over-studied by the international scholarship – this research aims to investigate how everyday practices change within and between local, migrant, and refugee communities in times of emergency and in response to neoliberal humanitarian policies and emerging cultures of everyday life. Thereby, the paper contributes to shaping emergency humanitarianism as a further arena in which to discuss practice theory and the ethnographic investigation of routine commodities.

5) **Rahman Dağ** (Adiyaman University), *Syrian Crisis and the Recent Conflict between the Turkish State and the PKK*

In the mid-first decade of the 21st century, Turkey's relations with Syria government-led by Bashar Assad was the best ever comparing to whole 20th century. One of the crucial issues discussed within relatively good bilateral relations was the Kurdish rights in Syria; they were not even recognized and given identity cards to get basic governmental services. Reform suggestions coming from Turkey high-rank officials to Syrian authorities has dramatically ceased because of the Syrian crisis erupted as a reactions to dictatorial politics, of course with the effective influence of Arab Springs in other Arab countries. Syrian crisis not only bottomed the Turkey-Syrian relations but also worsened peace process in Turkey, officially declared in the 2013 Newroz meeting in Diyarbakır with the latter sent by Abdullah Öcalan, imprisoned leader the PKK. Kurds in Syria, under the inorganic and ideological control of the PKK but officially led by the PYD (Democratic Union Party) as political wing and YPG (People's Protection Units) as military wing took the advantage of withdrawal of Assad forces from the Kurdish dominated areas and unilaterally declared their local political sovereignty, as cantons, in the areas in which they are in control. Turkey's Syrian policy of prioritizing the removal of the Assad regime and then deciding the local autonomies was not accepted by the PYD/YPG as well as PKK/KCK. Additionally Syrian Kurds' demand of recognition of their cantons by Turkey and unconditionally opening of a humanitarian corridor from Turkey to Kobani accelerated the contradictions between the Turkey and PKK/KCK who were in the meantime negotiating a peaceful solution for Kurdish question in Turkey. Above picturized political differences on Syrian crisis has gone further and resulted current dissolution of negotiation table and so triggered reciprocal tense armed attacks in Turkey on the eve of new general election in the first of November. This paper will analyze the influence of Syrian crisis on the peace process in Turkey through Rojava cantons. Then a broad assessment of how to come that much conflict after a massive hope for the solution will take place. Finally it is going to present a near future projection on recent conflict between the PKK/KCK and Turkey.

6) **Federico Donelli** (University of Genoa), **Erman Akıllı** (Ahi Evran Univesity), *The implications of Syrian refugees crisis on Turkey's foreign policy: an invigorated security dilemma*

Considering the war exploded near its borders, which is the test of Syrian uprising after 2011, and the consequent emergency of the migrants' flow, particularly in 2014-2015, this work has the aim to understand how should Turkey be addressing this challenge and what kind of impacts will have on her foreign policy as well as on precarious regional balance. The paper focused, first of all, on the threat of the Turkish security dilemma worsened after the crisis in Syria. Secondly, the paper will be oriented to analyze repercussions on Turkey's foreign policy of Syrian refugees arrived en masse to southern Turkey during last four years. Drawing on the critical security dilemma framework, the article analyze how refugee flow from Syria has altered traditional issues of security in Turkey, determining her foreign policy choices.