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## **READING THE 1948 AND 1967 ARAB-ISRAELI WARS THROUGH TURKISH ISLAMIC THOUGHT; CONTINUITIES AND CHANGES**

*Ahmet KÖROĞLU\**

### **ABSTRACT**

This study will draw attention to the two important historical moments during the Palestinian conflict and will focus how they have been perceived and been debated among the Turkish Islamism. These two important moments to be focused are the 1948 Arab-Israeli War which emerged immediately after the establishment of Israel, and the 1967 Six Days War, which occurred almost 20 years after the first one and lasted only six days. In both wars, the Arabs have been defeated, and the newly established state of Israel got a chance to increase his power in the region and strengthened their policies towards the vulnerable region. Moreover, both wars brought about critical ruptures and renewals within the ideas of nationalism, socialism, and Islamism as the political thought of Arab World. Firstly, in this work, it will be analyzed how these changes are perceived and discussed from the perspective of a different Islamic country which out of the region. In this regard, Turkey is an interesting example with his different political attitudes to the region and more importantly the historical ties and relations with the societies of the region. Then, after mentioning briefly as a matter of the Turkish Foreign policy approaches to these two major wars, I will focus the idea of Islamism that has revealed itself in different forms in both periods and its approaching to these two important wars and aftermath. Although the Palestine-Israel issue has always been occupied an important place in the Islamic thought in Turkey, because of its periodic changes at different eras, Turkish Islamism has ascribed different meanings to the developments in the region over these two wars. In the Turkish Islamic thought, on the one hand, there are some approaches to these developments in the region that have based on more global scale and external outbreaks, on the other hand, there are also approaches in both cases that deal with the attitude of the Arab States and more generally



\* Arş. Gör., İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Siyaset Bilimi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler, El-mek: korogluahmet87@gmail.com

the situation of Muslims in a self-criticism. Finally, in this study, all these debates will be handled through some effective Islamic periodicals such as *Sebilürresad*, *Büyük Doğu*, *Hilal* and *İslam* as important grounds for discussing the issues of Islamic thought.

### STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

The wars and relations experienced with Israel in forming the Arab world's social and political development and ideology in the 20th century had a major determinant. In one sense, the wars experienced with the state of Israel have had an important function in the region's political development and, therefore, determining the continuity and breaks in the world of thought. As a matter of fact, this situation became apparent after both wars, and the visibility of new thought trends and their activity increased over new pursuits. This change in the world of thought showed itself most prominently in the form of the fall of Arab Socialism and Nationalism and the rise of Islamism that prevailed prior to the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. This study also is focusing on how a change in the world of Arab intellectual thought generally accompanied these two wars briefly, mainly attempting to examine how Islamist thought in Turkey also read these two wars in parallel with these developments. The responses that Islamist thought in Turkey have shown in this sense will be obtained through the discussions in the more prominent Islamic periodicals of that period. A serious shock was experienced in the Arab world through their defeat in the first battle engaged with Israel in 1948. Establishing the state of Israel alongside its immediate successes and a victory like this against the Arabs who are older historically and culturally, whether wanted or not, propelled Arab intellectuals to seek answers about the reasons for this issue. Islamist thought forms a central role within this issue in this background, where an important dimension of the discussions advances over intellectual crises. In particular, the 1967 Arab-Israeli War led to the emergence of a serious belief in the direction that Arab Nationalism and Socialism anymore would fill the gap, and a large part of this has been interpreted as such using general lines. The way to forming a widespread opinion about Islamist thought becoming the new and dominant discourse in the region anymore thus began opening. Despite all the pretension and claims of the 1960s, Arab socialism and nationalisms' inability to block this experienced disaster from emerging began to show that questioning what had been experienced once again through new arguments was inescapable. However, to me, Turkey as a non-Arab country, yet having had management of Palestinian lands for a long time in the past and, apart from this, its approaches toward this issue through the peculiarity of its being an Islamic country, poses importance. In this article, before proceeding with a detailed investigation of the responses of Islamist thought in Turkey shown toward the two Arab-Israeli wars, I am taking a brief look at the foreign-policy approach of the Turkish state towards these two wars. In this way, the similarities and differences in the approach of Turkish Islamism to the issues of the period will emerge through Turkish state policies. First, contrary to the general assertion, Turkey's interest with the Middle East during the Cold War was not developed indifferently toward the region. Developments experienced in the Middle East, particularly after World War II, were closely followed

politically in Turkey; nevertheless, the Turkish public did not remain indifferent toward the developments the region experienced. The Palestine issue became a political issue that Turkey followed closely along with the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948; in the Arab-Israeli Wars, both the war in 1948 experienced by Arabs after the founding of the Israeli state as well as the one that would happen again in 1967, Turkey was able to develop policies apart from its dominant foreign political alliances and orientations. In this work next in line after this, Islamist thought in Turkey is being handled in the approaches to these two important wars between Israelis and Arabs and to the Palestine issues particularly in these wars; how these approaches continued in terms of continuity and intermittency will be covered in detail. The matter that needs to be firstly identified is that at no time were the Islamists in Turkey indifferent toward the Palestine issue. In both the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars, the Palestine issue was not one that only involved Arabs; for many reasons and beyond they saw it as an issue also involving Turkey. Although there have been different approaches to the issue at different times, the Palestine issue has basically always been the focus of interest of nationalist-conservative Islamist thought in Turkey. One of the most significant backgrounds forming the approaches to this issue has been the emphasis that Palestinian lands were under Ottoman control for a time, and Turkey also was a party to this issue in this aspect. Another backstory Islamist thought in Turkey used for owning the issue was also handled over Abdul Hamid II. This reading style forms one type of discourse that is not limited to only the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli Wars; it is also still much-spoken of today by the same section and has been used to arbitrate Turkey's position on the Palestinian issue. With motion toward all these, that Islamist thought in Turkey circulated ownership of the Palestinian issue and saw this as an issue of historical heritage in Turkey provides the stance that has proposed persistence in more or less every period of the Palestinian issue. However, expressing that a similar continuity is not seen in Turkey's foreign policy approach on the Palestinian issue is possible. In the 1950s, the general tendency to place Turkey in the center and analyze events accordingly was a common format while dealing with matters related to foreign policy and politics in Turkish Islamism. Turkey was thus placed in the center as an historical wholeness, and, as such, Turkey's Ottoman-based history also was treated with significant emphasis. This situation could also be seen in the responses that Islamist thought in Turkey showed over the situation that emerged following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. In this context, if the Palestinian issue is seen in Turkish Islamism as a natural issue of Turkey regarding Abdul Hamid II, the defeat of the Arabs against the state of Israel in 1948 was also partly due to the countries in the region being exhausted from having left the Ottoman Empire and exhibiting a scattered view on their own. The belief related to Arabs' break from the Ottoman Empire opening the way to the state of Israel and Israeli state's inability to have been established in case the Ottoman Empire had continued form an important core in the Islamist thought in Turkey and has been at the forefront as an ongoing element of continuity at different times. The State of Israel's establishment in 1948 and Arabs' defeat in the war that immediately broke out was met with sorrow by the Islamists in Turkey; however, this sorrow turned to anger towards Arabs over time and to criticisms that developed towards policies after 1967 Six Days War. After this war, the Egyptian leader Nasser giving priority to the war

at first naturally made him the target at the post-war table. An even more significant consequence of the war was how Arab socialism and nationalism, represented through Nasser, became subject to major criticism and how Islamic thought among the countries of the region opened the way to its emergence more prominently. The emergence of such a result also naturally found reflection within Islamic thought in Turkey in particular and has had significant effects on the responses Islamist thought in Turkey developed towards both the event and for navigating it. Hence, while the criticisms that were brought against the Arab states in both wars also could be seen as an element of continuity, the nature of criticisms in the later period and the sharpness and hardness of the dosage is a situation that can be explained through the change of Islamic discourse following the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and that brought with it a differentiation. After the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, these debates showed themselves on the Egyptian leader of the time, Gamal Abdel Nasser, and their discussion on Arabism and Islamism in particular.

In sum, The Palestinian issue has been followed interestedly by Turkish policy maker and society since the very beginning. This situation has paved the way for discussing the issue in many different circles. Not only the Islamists but also the leftist, nationalist or secular thoughts focus on this issue with different approaches. Among them,, the Islamists have had crucial roles at this point in their historical process in Turkey. When the Israel State was established on May 1948 in the Middle East region, the Turkish Islamists didn't accept this fait accompli fact and highlighted the negative effects of this fact on the region. They didn't criticize only the Israel and but also; they criticized Turkish government for the decision of recognizing Israel as a legal state. On the other hand, the Islamist, at that time, share their thoughts about the Palestinian issue with nationalistic arguments mostly. When we look at that time Turkish Islamism and its close relations with Turkish nationalism, this was appropriate approach to the Palestinian issue. Because of that, some Turkish Islamists could criticize easily to the Arab States for their positions and policies at that time. Especially the years of 1960's are turning point for the Islamism in Turkey. On these years Turkish Islamism established more relations with other Islamic countries and these relations influenced the Turkish Islamism' approaches in many ways. When we look at the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and the critics of this war by the Turkish Islamism, we can see these changes and different kind of approaches of new Turkish Islamist discourse. When the Turkish Islamists criticized the Arab states for their separations of Ottoman Empire and some other similar policies in the first Arab-Israeli war, they criticized the Arab states and rulers for their diverging from Islam in the later one at 1967. Also, to need an Islamic Unity had been emphasized more intense by the Turkish Islamist after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. This new agenda of Turkish Islamists developed in parallel with the global Islamic revival and its new discourse. By this way Turkish Islamism can differentiate into new approaches over time easily. I've tried to show this change of approaches over the most important two Arab-Israeli wars. But these changes and continuities in the Turkish Islamism can be followed by many other similar cases through historical process.

**Keywords:** 1948 Arab-Israeli War, 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Turkey, Islamic Thought, Islamic Periodicals

## 1948 ve 1967 ARAP İSRAİL SAVAŞLARINI TÜRKİYE İSLAMCILIK DÜŞÜNCESİ ÜZERİNDEN OKUMAK; SÜREKLİLİK VE KIRILMALAR

### ÖZET

Bu çalışma Filistin Meselesinin tarihi seyrinde iki önemli olaya dikkat çekecek ve bu iki olayın dönemin Türkiye'sinde İslamcılık düşüncesi içinde nasıl algılandığı ve tartışıldığına odaklanacaktır. İncelenen iki önemli olay İsrail'in hemen kuruluşu akabinde ortaya çıkan 1948 Arap-İsrail Savaşı ve bu savaştan yaklaşık 20 yıl sonra Arap Dünyası açısından yine bir dönemeç noktası oluşturacak olan 1967 tarihli Arap-İsrail Savaşıdır. Her iki savaşta da Arapların yenilgiye uğraması ile İsrail'in bölgede mevcut gücü artmış ve bölgeye dair geliştirdiği politikalarını daha da tahkim etme imkanını elde etmiştir. Bundan da öte her iki savaş Arap Dünyasının kendi içinde milliyetçilik-sosyalizm-İslamcılık tartışmaları bağlamında önemli düşünce kırılmalarını beraberinde getirmiş ve bu anlamda Arap dünyasında siyasi düşünceler olarak büyük değişim ve yenilenmeler beraberinde oraya çıkmıştır. Bu çalışmada bu süreçlere kısaca değinildikten sonra öncelikle bu kırılmaların bölge dışından farklı bir İslam ülkesi gözünden nasıl ele alındığı ve tartışıldığı üzerinde durulacaktır. Bu anlamda Türkiye bölge ile olan tarihi geçmişi birlikteliği ve sonrasında bölgeye dair geliştirdiği farklı politik tutumlar ile ilginç bir örnek oluşturmaktadır. Buradan hareketle her iki savaşın yaşandığı dönemde Türkiye'nin dış politika olarak meseleye yaklaşımı da kısaca aktarıldıktan sonra asıl olarak her iki farklı dönemde kendisini farklı şekillerde ortaya koyan bir düşünce akımı olarak İslamcılık düşüncesinin bu iki önemli savaşa ve sonrası yaşananlara karşı yaklaşımı ele alınmış olacaktır. Türkiye'de İslamcılık düşüncesinde Filistin Meselesi her zaman önemli bir yer tutmakla beraber farklı dönemlerde İslamcı düşüncenin kendi dönemsel değişimleri ve iç farklılaşmaları bu iki savaş üzerinden de bölgedeki gelişmelere karşı farklı anlamlandırmaların ve tepkilerin doğmasını beraberinde getirmiştir. Bölgede yaşanan bu gelişmeleri İslamcılık düşüncesi içinde daha küresel ölçekte ve dış mihraklara dayanarak ele alan yorumlama biçimleri olduğu gibi her iki olayda da Arap Devletlerinin tutumunu ve daha genelde Müslümanların durumunu bir özeleştirici içinde ele alan yaklaşımlar da mevcuttur. Tüm bu tartışmalar dönemin İslamcı düşüncesinin tartışıldığı önemli bir zemin olarak Sebilürreşad, Büyükdoğu, Hilal Dergisi ve İslam Mecmuası gibi bir takım süreli yayınlar üzerinden aktararak ele alınacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** 1948 Arap-İsrail Savaşı, 1967 Arap-İsrail Savaşı, Türkiye, İslamcılık Düşüncesi, İslamcı Dergiler

### Introduction

*"At no point in my life have I lost my conscience this way or experienced disappointment."* These words belong to the Nobel Prize winner Naguib Mahfouz, an important name from the day

after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, not just for Egypt, but for the entire Arab world (Mahfouz, 1997, p. 114). These emotions were not limited to what he felt. Tewfik al-Hakim, an Egyptian and important literary figure of the time, also allotted wide space in his book to explaining the disappointments experienced at that time, as well as Egypt's political life in the 1950s and 1960s. In his book, al-Hakim tells the long story of how the mighty leaders of Egypt at the time, being intellectuals with different backgrounds for that period in Egypt, believed Nasser and saw him almost like the Mahdi; al-Hakim tries to retrospectively understand and question what the power was that entranced themselves this way (Al-Hakim, 1985, pp. 40-45). This is because according to them, the disappointments resulting from the defeat in the 1948 Arab-Israeli war had been left behind, and the unfortunate history that had caused the 1948 war had been changed back through intellectual developments like the rise of Arab socialism and nationalism experienced in the Arab world in the years following that war. However, that this was not the case became clear after a while with the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli War in 1967. As early as 20 years after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, the prescriptions the Arabs had produced for solving and liberating were also finally understood not to be the cure to their troubles. After the first war experienced with Israel, the quest for struggling against colonialism had become even stronger in Arab countries as a resulting output of this war; national awareness began to rise, and Arab countries' struggle for unity among themselves began coming to the fore. Indeed, although these attempted efforts had suffered failure in certain directions earlier due to different reasons, the 1967 Arab-Israeli War had formed an important impetus for finding new solutions to enter into the recent quests in the region alongside this war (Abdallah Laroui, 1976, p. viii). This situation shows us that the wars and relations experienced with Israel in forming the Arab world's social and political development and ideology in the 20th century had a major determinant. In one sense, the wars experienced with the state of Israel have had an important function in the region's political development and, therefore, determining the continuity and breaks in the world of thought. As a matter of fact, this situation became apparent after both wars, and the visibility of new thought trends and their activity increased over new pursuits. This change in the world of thought showed itself most prominently in the form of the fall of Arab Socialism and Nationalism and the Rise of Islamism that prevailed prior to the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. This study will also briefly focus on how a change in the world of Arab intellectual thought generally accompanied these two wars, mainly attempting to examine how Islamist thought in Turkey also read these two wars in parallel with these developments. The responses that Islamist thought in Turkey have shown in this sense will be obtained through the discussions in the more prominent Islamic periodicals of that period.

### **Is There A Failure of Arab Socialism/Nationalism or Awakening Islamism?**

A serious shock was experienced in the Arab world through their defeat in the first battle engaged with Israel in 1948. Establishing the state of Israel alongside its immediate successes and a victory like this against the Arabs who are older historically and culturally, whether wanted or not, propelled Arab intellectuals to seek answers about the reasons for this issue. A dominant discourse that appeared in the search for this answer intensified the issue over the idea that Arabs were unable to have technological superiority and could not adequately follow or apply scientific developments (Doğrul, Filistin Savaşında Kimler Yenildi? [Who were defeated in the Palestine War?], 1948).<sup>1</sup> Together with this, comments that in particular also explained the results of the war in 1948 through Arabs' inability to form a union among themselves or improve the nervousness within their own

<sup>1</sup> For the two kinds of different approaches see: Ahmed Bahaeddin, *Israeliyat wa maba'ad Al-udwan* [Israelites and the Aftermath of the Aggression] (Cairo: n.d.) and Constantine Zurayk, *The Meaning of the Disaster Revisited* (Beirut: 1967), 14-16. At the same time in Turkey there are some similar arguments among the both secular and religious intellectual circles which approach to this issue in the same way. However, these kinds of approaches were being criticized by some Islamists "being an instrument to propagandas which origins is not known".

culture enough were strongly voiced as well. These thoughts formed the basis of more concrete initiatives in the 1950s, and the rise of Arab nationalism started to become ever more prominent through some of these initiatives. All these efforts in fact further highlighted the idea of not reading the situation that was revealed through the Arab-Israel wars just as a military defeat, but beyond this as the issue of a crisis being reflected socially and intellectually as well.

Islamist thought also forms a central role within these discussions in this background, where an important dimension of the discussions advances over intellectual crises. In particular, the 1967 Arab-Israeli War led to the emergence of a serious belief in the direction that Arab Nationalism and Socialism anymore would fill the gap, and a large part of this has been interpreted as such using general lines (Dawisha, 2003; Ajami, *The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice since 1967*, 1981; Ajami, *The End of Pan-Arabism*, 1978-1979; Tibi, 1980; Khashan, 2000). The way to forming a widespread opinion about Islamist thought becoming the new and dominant discourse in the region anymore thus began opening. Despite all the pretension and claims of the 1960s, Arab socialism and nationalisms' inability to block this experienced disaster from emerging began to show that questioning what had been experienced once again through new arguments was inescapable. Precisely here at this stage, Islamist thought functioned over these disasters as a discourse that mobilized the Arab world and formed an area for self-expression (Dekmejian, 1985; Esposito, 1991; Hunter, 1988).<sup>2</sup> Because of being distanced from religion and not having their religious needs fulfilled in particular, saying all these disasters that came to the head of the Islamic world is not just the Arabic world; it became an important factor that made the coming alive of an Islamist potential possible in the whole Islamic world (Gerges, *The Transformation of Arab Politics in 1967 Arab-Israeli War Origins and Consequences*, 2012, pp. 305-308). By the Islamic world developing the possibilities of communication and interaction within itself through the 1960s and, in parallel with this, through the increase of the Islamist revival in this period, the Arab-Israeli Wars henceforth began to be more on the agendas of different Islamic countries, and the different concepts of Islamism in these countries were also the beginnings of producing their own discourses towards all these experiences. In my opinion, Turkey as a non-Arab country, yet having had management of Palestinian lands for a long time in the past and, apart from this, its approaches toward this issue through the peculiarity of its being an Islamic country, poses importance. In the next section of the article, before proceeding with a detailed investigation of the responses of Islamist thought in Turkey shown toward the two Arab-Israeli wars, I will take a brief look at the foreign-policy approach of the Turkish state towards these two wars. In this way, the similarities and differences in the approach of Turkish Islamism to the issues of the period will emerge through Turkish state policies.

### **Turkey's Political Approach toward Palestine in the Two Significant Arab-Israeli Wars**

Contrary to the general assertion, Turkey's interest with the Middle East during the Cold War was not developed indifferently toward the region. Developments experienced in the Middle East, particularly after World War II, were closely followed politically in Turkey; nevertheless, the Turkish public did not remain indifferent toward the developments the region experienced. In fact, the public sometimes also was a decisive factor in shaping Turkey's Middle East Policy. Turkey positioned itself immediately after World War II within the Western alliance against the Soviet threat in the newly formed global system. The policies Turkey conducted toward the Middle East could show differences in this sense and talking about a unidirectional policy was quite impossible (Hale, 2002, pp. 109-146; Karpat, 1975, pp. 115-116; Robins, 1991, pp. 66-67). The Palestine issue became a political issue that Turkey followed closely along with the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948; in the Arab-Israeli Wars, both the war in 1948 experienced by Arabs after the founding of the

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<sup>2</sup> However, you can see one of the different arguments of Fawaz Gerges: Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Transformation of Arab Politics in 1967 Arab-Israeli War Origins and Consequences* ed. Wm. Roger Louis and Avi Shlaim (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 285-313

Israeli state as well as the one that would happen again in 1967, Turkey was able to develop policies apart from its dominant foreign political alliances and orientations. Turkey voted against and remained opposed to the division decision #181 of the UN General Assembly, which it predicted in 1947 as having an important place in the developments leading to the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948, compared to the USA and USSR who voted in favor of it (Erhan & Kurkcuoğlu, 2009, p. 637). In fact, this decision from Turkey was welcomed and appreciated by most Arab countries (Soysal, 1986, p. 250). Turkey, which at first did not recognize the Israeli state, recognized it on March 28, 1949 immediately after being sure of the USSR's political approaches toward the newly established Israeli state and after the start of US aid in the framework of the Truman Doctrine (Amikam Nachmani, 1987, pp. 47-48).<sup>3</sup> Previous to Turkey's formal recognition of Israel, the Israeli state's declaration of independence, and whether or not the UK's many years of predominant rule in the region would end, the Arab states began an all-out war against the state of Israel to protect Palestine's territorial integrity and seized many areas in the region in a short period of time (Morris, 2008, p. 205). However, after a short time the situation in the war reversed and the Israeli state was able to capture many more lands than foreseen for itself in the UN Division Plan #181; this war brought a great deal of drama in general for Arabs and in particular also for Palestine.

Emerging about 20 years after the first Arab-Israeli War, another Arab-Israeli War was carried out in June 1967 that would greatly affect developments in the region. The state of Israel right away inflicted a major defeat of the Arab states at the edge of Egypt in a short time, like six days (Armaoğlu, 2017, pp. 201-268). Nothing continued like before in the region after this heavy defeat, which has been a very important factor in changing the dominant ideologies of the region, as mentioned above. The political approach Turkey developed regarding the region in this war was different compared to its previous one. Through the impact of certain problems Turkey had been experiencing with its Western allies since the start of the 1960s, Turkey was included clearly on the side of the Arabs (Gürpınar, 2008, pp. 350-355). Turkey, unlike its allies, continued to support the Arabs in related contexts after the end of the war. This support has even shown itself in the form of concrete benefits for defeated Arab countries on certain occasions after the war. Turkey, emphasizing after the war that Israel must be removed from the occupied lands in various discourses, has defended that Palestine's territorial integrity must be assumed and insistently stressed this policy at international meetings. On the other hand, Turkey has also emphasized sincere reciprocal ties at the public level since it passed, drawing attention to the friendships it has with Arab countries and mutual good-will relations while implementing these policies (Gürpınar, 2008, p. 360). In fact, the administrators of Arab countries appreciate Turkey standing alongside them this way in these difficult days and also has not hesitated to voice proudly that they see these approaches as a great source of courage at those days (Gürpınar, 2008, p. 365). Many different factors existed in the Turkish foreign policy approaches to the Arab-Israeli Wars of 1948 and 1967, both of which resulted in the Arabs' defeat. This change has had effects on both the emergence of different political attitudes from public opinion and Islamists' views in Turkey, which will be particularly focused on in this study, as well as on taking their own position. Next in line after this, Islamist thought in Turkey will be handled in the approaches to these two important wars between Israelis and Arabs and to the Palestine issues particularly in these wars; how these approaches continued in terms of continuity and intermittency will be covered in detail.

<sup>3</sup> Turkey became the first Muslim country to recognize legitimacy of Israel. USA's recognition of Israel has a major effect on Turkey's recognition of Israel at that time. The second Muslim State of recognizing Israel is Iran.

### The Period's Islamist Approaches in Turkey to Foreign Policy Towards Governments' Israeli-Arab Relations

The matter that needs to be firstly identified is that at no time were the Islamists in Turkey indifferent toward the Palestine issue. In both the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars, the Palestine issue was not one that only involved Arabs; for many reasons and beyond they saw it as an issue also involving Turkey. Although there have been different approaches to the issue at different times, the Palestine issue has basically always been the focus of interest of nationalist-conservative Islamist thought in Turkey (Feyizoğlu, 2011; Bulut, 1998). One of the most significant backgrounds forming the approaches to this issue has been the emphasis that Palestinian lands were under Ottoman control for a time, and Turkey also was a party to this issue in this aspect. Particularly in the 1940s and 1950s, the writings that Cevat Rifat Atilhan,<sup>4</sup> who penned contemporarily in dozens of different areas on Judaism, Zionism, and Arab-Israeli relations too, wrote on this matter are significant. In the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Atilhan wrote towards the criticisms raised in the form of why Turkey should be included in the matter and what relevance this issue could possibly have with Turkish society: *"What possible relevance can Turks have with the case of Palestine, which has wrapped the world in a new trouble from the start? Such a query can only be put forth by the numbers of certain limited, superficial, brainy people who know nothing more than themselves and today, because today's state of the Palestinian case is nothing more than the consequence of a vile assassin who first arranged to dismantle the Turkish Empire. This was the Jewish passphrase: 'Strike the world. Break the Turkish State. Own Palestine! (Cevat Rifat Atilhan, 1948, p. 45)".*<sup>5</sup> In another article he penned on the *Sebilürreşad*, Atilhan showed through clearer lines this situation: *"...said in short, as much as the Palestinian case is an Arab case, it has earlier been a Turkish and Muslim case, even a case of the whole Orient. The Turkish nation has only worked, suffered, and sacrificed tens of thousands of children for years for the sake of this case. Now, if it is shown as an Arab case, surely the issue is that it is more sophisticated and more important."* (Atilhan, Asri Ehli Salib: Siyonizm [Modern Crusaders: Zionism], 1949, p. 283). This approach constitutes a very distinctive character of ownership in Turkey to the Palestinian issue. Indeed, Münevver Ayaşlı, in one of her writings penned three issues in a row in the magazine *Tohum* after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, interpreted the 1967 defeat as, *"...In our opinion, these blessed places were not lost to Islam on June 6, 1967, they were lost exactly 49 years before this deplorable incident when the Turkish army withdrew from Palestine and Jerusalem in 1918..."* (Ayasli, 1968, pp. 10-11). Namely, even though 50 years had in fact since passed, this defeat had actually started with the Ottoman withdrawal from the region and has been going on ever since. This approach shows Islamist thought in Turkey to reveal what motivates ownership of the Palestinian issue, and this thought structure offers continuity in the approaches of both the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli Wars and even still today (Doğrul, Siyonistlerle Yapılan Harbin Geçirdiği Safhalar [Stages of the War with Zionists], 1948, p. 4). Another backstory Islamist thought in Turkey used for owning the issue was also handled over Abdul Hamid II. This reading style forms one type of discourse that is not limited to only the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli Wars; it is also still much-spoken of today by the same section and has been used to arbitrate Turkey's position on the

<sup>4</sup> Cevat Rifat Atilhan was one of the most well-known Turkish author to write about Jews-Judaism -Zionism and some similar topics. He has penned more than 50 books about these topics and countless articles as well. To look detailed information about Cevat Rifat Atilhan see: Rifat Bali, "Yaşam Öyküsü, Yayınları ve Düşünce Dünyası ile Cevat Rifat Atilhan-I- [Life, Publications and His Thought: Cevat Rifat Atilhan -I-]" *Tarih ve Toplum*, 175 (1998): 15-24 and Rifat Bali, "Yaşam Öyküsü, Yayınları ve Düşünce Dünyası ile Cevat Rifat Atilhan-II- [Life, Publications and His Thought: Cevat Rifat Atilhan -II-]" *Tarih ve Toplum*, 176 (1998): 21-30

<sup>5</sup> Also, he states in one of another writing: *"We are in a danger which threats our country seriously as much as all near Eastern region and Arabic World. This danger is Red Zionism."* Cevat Rifat Atilhan, "Filistin İçin Cihadı Mukaddes [Holy War for Palestine]", *Sebilürreşad*, May 1, 1948, 7. Moreover, even after almost 20 years he wrote another article about this topic and he offered *"The Palestine issue is not for only Arab Issue, this is an Islam issue without concerning any tribe, clan, race or sects. All Muslims have to focus this issue."* Cevat Rifat Atilhan, "Türk-Arap Birleşik Devleti [Turk-Arab United States]", *Sebilürreşad*, July 7, 1957, 122-123

Palestinian issue. For example, Mehmet Hilmi Gül, who had related the defeat received in the 1948 war with the era of Abdulhamid II, wrote, “*If Arabs in 1948 had responded to the Jews the way the Ottoman Empire responded to Theodore Herzl during the era of Abdulhamid II, one can say the Israeli State would not have been able to be established.*” (Gül, 1985, p. 22). In addition to this, another writer, voicing thoughts related to the topic in a different issue of the same magazine, draws attention to the importance of the historical process for clarifying the issues in Palestine and connects the way to opening the State of Israel with the fall of Abdulhamid II (Akyazılı, 1986, pp. 30-31). Also, the magazine *Hilal*, an important Islamist periodical of that time, noted the basic path for realizing the Promised Land, which forms the background philosophy for establishing the state of Israel, takes place on Ottoman lands, and endorsed the Jews “*had at least not been able to succeed during the era of Abdulhamid Han II as from him they had encountered very serious resistance to their aspirations.*” (Ortaşark Harbi Münasebetiyle [Due to Middle East War], 1967, p. 2).<sup>6</sup> With motion toward all these, that Islamist thought in Turkey circulated ownership of the Palestinian issue and saw this as an issue of historical heritage in Turkey provides the stance that has proposed persistence in more or less every period of the Palestinian issue. However, expressing that a similar continuity is not seen in Turkey’s foreign policy approach on the Palestinian issue is possible, which we summarized above.

As previously stated, Turkey pursued a cautious policy after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, however later coming to rest on the side of Israel and recognizing it in 1949. In this case, the situation was not pleasantly met by the Islamist groups in Turkey, and the disturbances felt from this emerging situation were poured into the lines of Islamist publications in a variety of ways. Writings came out from time to time related to this topic from the major Islamist publications like *Sebilürreşad*, *Selamet*, *Büyük Doğu*, etc., discussing policies that Turkey had developed in accordance with the current situation not principled. Ömer Rıza Doğrul, one name that related the Palestinian issue of the period to Turkey now and then by going to the region, expressed feeling sorrow for Turkey’s passivity in the Arab-Israeli war that began in 1948 and for not doing anything; he stated that Turkey needs to be active, however, in solving the current problem and on the topic of helping Arabs (Ömer Rıza Doğrul, 1948, p. 270). Similarly, Cevat Rifat Atilhan also criticized Turkey’s silence on the Palestinian issue and stated the primary reason for this to have been caused by the false understandings that had been applied toward the religion of Islam during the Republican period. According to Atilhan, this false approach to religion also showed itself in the policies applied toward Islamic countries, and Turkey, as an extension of these, also had not done its part during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War (Atilhan, Dünya Müslüman Birliği [World Muslim Union], 1949, p. 168; Atilhan, Seyahat İntibaları 3: İslam Dünyasında Uyanan Şuur [Travel Feelings III: Awakening Consciousness in the Islamic World], 1949, p. 94).<sup>7</sup> In Islamist periodicals over the following years, Turkey was also generally criticized, being the first Muslim country to recognize Israel at that time, and they focused on the reasons for this. The emphasis on the point the criticisms focused on in this sense gained strength more in terms of Turkey recognizing the State of Israel as a reflection its having chosen the Western Alliance in the two-sided world order that had been newly formed at that time (İslam, 1986, p. 1).<sup>8</sup> Turkey’s stand on the side of the Arabs in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War was met with substantial appreciation by some Islamist publications of the period (Pilavoğlu, Hükümetimiz Arapları Destekliyor [Our Government Supports

<sup>6</sup> Also, there is another view on this topic of Cevat Rifat Atilhan: Atilhan, “Filistin,”<sup>46</sup>

<sup>7</sup> For a later another similar approach: İsmail Kılıçoğlu: “İsrail’in Güvenliği İçin (mi?) [For Israel’s Security (?)]”, *İslam*, no.81 (1990): 40

<sup>8</sup> There is also an interesting and paradigm-shifting statement of Ömer Rıza Doğrul in this issue that he considered the recognition of Israel as an inherent process and not surprise. Doğrul asserted that there was no other option for Turkey to recognize Israel as a legitimate state. Furthermore, to him, if Arabs could be organized among themselves and not were defeated by Israel in this way, it could be criticized to Turkey why recognized Israel. See more: Ömer Rıza Doğrul, “İsrail Devletini Tanımak [Recognizing the State of Israel]” *Selamet*, April 6, 1949, 13-15

Arabs], 1967, p. 1). Alongside this, however, the discourse of Islamist thought becoming a little sharper in the 1960s in Turkey, in spite of the policies the Turkish government developed in favor of the Arabs, had come from a measure of ignorance from the side of the Islamist periodicals of the period. Alongside this and beyond it as well, the Islamists who saw that no matter how much Turkey developed a policy in favor of the Arabs, it would not be enough in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War that would pass, and those who thought the foreign policy Turkey had developed were so many they could not be underestimated<sup>9</sup>.

### **The Turkish Islamist Attitude towards the Arab-Israeli Wars in the Grip of Nationalism and the Islamic Ummah**

In the 1950s, the general tendency to place Turkey in the center and analyze events accordingly was a common format while dealing with matters related to foreign policy and politics in Turkish Islamism. Turkey was thus placed in the center as an historical wholeness, and, as such, Turkey's Ottoman-based history also was treated with significant emphasis. This situation could also be seen in the responses that Islamist thought in Turkey showed over the situation that emerged following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. In this context, if the Palestinian issue is seen in Turkish Islamism as a natural issue of Turkey regarding Abdul Hamid II, the defeat of the Arabs against the state of Israel in 1948 was also partly due to the countries in the region being exhausted from having left the Ottoman Empire and exhibiting a scattered view on their own. One can see numerous penned articles in publications that would support this perspective of Islamism in Turkey following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War in particular. One can see this perspective from the writings of Raif Ogan, who has an important place within the Islamist thought of the period and who wrote about the Palestinian issue frequently. Raif Ogan linked the establishment of the Israeli State and the defeat of the Arabs in the war that subsequently emerged directly to Arabs having separated from the Ottoman Empire, and he proposed that Arabs being seized by their sense of nationalism opened the way to the Zionist state being established in the region (Ogan, Trablusgarp Vilayetimizi Satan Yahudi Masonlar [Jewish Freemasons who buy our Tripoli Province], 1949, p. 153). Ogan, in another writing penned in the same periods in the magazine *Büyük Doğu*, said, "*With the end of the Ottoman Empire, many states emerged in the geography of the Middle East; the Israeli state was established because the Jewish community in and around Jerusalem had come to a dominant state.*" (Ogan, Satılan İmparatorluk [Sold Empire], 1951, p. 6). The belief related to Arabs' break from the Ottoman Empire opening the way to the state of Israel and Israeli state's inability to have been established in case the Ottoman Empire had continued form an important core in the Islamist thought in Turkey and has been at the forefront as an ongoing element of continuity at different times. For example, seeing this situation is also possible in the writings of Sezai Karakoç, issuer of the *Diriliş* magazine, which began its publication life in 1966 and continued until 1992 with various interruptions. A later-dated article from around 1988 entitled "Filistin'in Kara Yazısı" [The Black Writing of Palestine] states, "...if the Ottoman Empire could have sustained its existence, these problems would not have come to the head of Middle Eastern societies," and emphasized that Palestinians have been the ones in the region most continuously affected since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire up to today (Diriliş, 1988, p. 1).

The State of Israel's establishment in 1948 and Arabs' defeat in the war that immediately broke out was met with sorrow by the Islamists in Turkey; however, this sorrow turned to anger towards Arabs over time and to criticisms that developed towards policies. In this context, one interesting example is the criticism directed at Arabs by Ömer Rıza Doğrul. Initially, Ömer Rıza

<sup>9</sup> Also, Necip Fazıl Kısakürek harshly criticized the Turkish governments policies towards this issue. According to him "this was not true being neutral and irrelevant to the Palestine issue and Turkey endangered itself in the politic arena." (B.D. 1967: 10). At this point, it is important to note that using pen names is very common in the Islamic Periodicals. As we see one example in this citation Necip Fazıl Kısakürek also used many pen names like B. D., B., Pervasisız [Fearless], Dedektif [Detective], Adını Vermeyen Profesör [Unknown Professor] in his writings.

Doğrul criticized groups who were commenting on the issue in Turkey at the beginning of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War in opposition to the Arabs and stated that, whether the Arabs are defeated or even if they're not, the solution to this outcome will be found and the conflict will continue (Doğrul, *Siyonistlerle Yapılan Harbin Geçirdiği Safhalar* [Stages of the War with Zionists], 1948, p. 4). However, Doğrul's view on this matter also changed in this instance, where in the course of the war the Arabs relationships among themselves emanated with the thrashing from the war, and he entered into an attitude that criticized Arabs. In a post in the *Selamet* magazine that he owned, he stated, "*The reason the Arab governments underwent this terrible misfortune is that they entered the fighting before being prepared, before being armed, before learning to move in the cycle of a common plan, and before providing unity among them through a serious exemplum. In short, Arab governments suffer from misfortunes both militarily and politically.*" (Doğrul, *Filistin Harbinin Tarihçesi* [The History of Palestine War], 1949, p. 3). Ömer Rıza Doğrul not only penned in his own publication about this topic; he also penned a group of articles in *Sebilürreşad* and increased the dose of his criticisms of the Arabs' defeat in the war together with Israel's further self-arbitration. In one of his posts of this manner, Doğrul stated, "...However, admitting the Arab rulers are far behind and in a responsible position in the field of politics and propaganda is imperative. The Arab leaders' dervish-like silence in response to the evil activity of Judah can never be forgiven... This is war. War is fluid and measured by its results. What painful and heavy years we passed in the wars of Independence. But eventually, The Supreme Being who orders 'Victory is from God' commanded the generous gift of the Help of God to the Muslim Turkish Army; we banded together, and we destroyed the invaders in the vicinity of the homeland," and called for help by placing Turkey in the center as a dominant discourse of the Islamist thinking of the period through the intent of comparing historical victories (Ömer Rıza Doğrul, 1948, p. 268; Doğrul, *Filistin Faciasının Son Perdesi* [Last Scene of Palestine Tragedy], 1948, p. 334). The Islamic discourse of the period, which thought of this heavy defeat not just as a great shame in terms of the Arabs but for all Muslims, was angry at the Arabs also because, in a sense, they could not protect the honor of all Muslims. In a post handling the reasons for the defeat of the 1948 war, Cevat Rifat Atilhan stated, "...through the taken defeat the Muslim way of life, its honor, has also been violated..." and expressed the sorrow that emerged from this situation by saying, "...*The Great Prophet weeps tears of blood in his grave. What happened, O Lord, a sprawling great nation driven from the world's heartland by a most downcast nation, justice sprawls to derogation and captivity. It falls to this state because of dissension.*" (Atilhan, *Ey Koca Arap Milleti, Ne İdin Ne Oldun?* [Oh Great Arab Nation, What You Were What You Are], 1949, p. 44).

### **Turning Point: Criticisms Hardening Towards Arabs Following the 1967 Arab-Israel War**

In the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, the Arabs suffering a leaden defeat in a short time of like six days and Israel gaining wider lands emerged as an unexpected result for the Arabs. The consequences of this war caused traumas and brought about more dramatic changes compared to the 1948 war in terms of the people of the region. The Egyptian leader Nasser giving priority to the war at first naturally made him the target at the post-war table. An even more significant consequence of the war was how Arab socialism and nationalism, represented through Nasser, became subject to major criticism and how Islamic thought among the countries of the region opened the way to its emergence more prominently. The emergence of such a result also naturally found reflection within Islamic thought in Turkey in particular and has had significant effects on the responses Islamist thought in Turkey developed towards both the event and for navigating it.

Islamic thought in Turkey being more prominent in thinking life through the 1960s and diversifying through Islamic publications with different backgrounds had an important role in also determining the prominences and orientations of approaches toward the 1967 Arab-Israeli War (Köroğlu, 2016, pp. 5-9). When comparing in this context the attitude Turkish Islamism took with

the 1948 Arab-Israeli War compared to the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and the results that emerged, certain continuities and breaks have also been brought together. At the head of elements bearing continuity comes first the continual criticism towards Arabs, especially Arab leaders who had been in the war. Because the Arabs had been unable to come together in the 1948 war, a criticism similar to the ones brought by names like Cevat Rifat Atilhan and Ömer Rıza Doğrul came in later periods from Ahmet Varol. Varol poured out his troubles about Arabs not being able to come together again in this war and directed his criticisms against them (Varol, 1986, p. 16). His criticisms, however, anymore became spoken more sharply. This sharp speech was also a bit related to the Islamist thought of the period. The Islamists of the period now questioned the legitimacy of the Arab states together with questioning the legitimacy of Israel. In a post penned in the *İslam*, Kemal Kahraman expressed, “...the legitimacy of the Arab states must be questioned to the extent of Israel’s, for the history of the Arab states is not much older than Israel.” (Kahraman, 1987, p. 44) Like Kemal Kahraman, Mesut Doğan also used negative language about the formation and existence of the Arab states. Doğan, who said, “Despite the people of Arab countries who have coiled themselves up today in the Ottoman heritage being Muslim, the administrations are Muslim in word,” used the adjective “puppet” for the administrative staff of the Arab states. Doğan drew attention to the US being able to direct these administrative staffs (Doğan, 1990, p. 17). Debates were sometimes able to reach as far as questioning the Muslim condition of Arab countries. In a post penned by Salih Özcan in the journal *Hilal*, an important Islamist publication of the period, Özcan emphasized the divide experienced in the Arab world and saw Nasser as the creator of this situation. According to Özcan, who stated that Syria followed policies similar to Egypt, “Both states have denied the religion of Allah.” (Özcan, 1967, p. 16) Hence, while the criticisms that were brought against the Arab states in both wars also could be seen as an element of continuity, the nature of criticisms in the later period and the sharpness and hardness of the dosage is a situation that can be explained through the change of Islamic discourse following the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and that brought with it a differentiation. After the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, these debates showed themselves on the Egyptian leader of the time, Gamal Abdel Nasser, and their discussion on Arabism and Islamism in particular.

### **Targeting Arab Nationalism/Socialism and Gamal Abdel Nasser Being the Focus of Criticism**

“The Arabs have been defeated. The Arabs who entered war were defeated because they did not behave like Muslims and because Kabul is stuck in Arab nationalism. This condition, which characterizes a person of the Bolshevik envoy, which we say by spitting in the masked faces of the internal agents that are in us, who fuss that the socialist Nasser has occasionally gained personality in the Arab nation, is the state of a lack of soul, of belief, and of spirituality.” (Kiverlioğlu, 1967, p. 1) These lines are an important demonstration in terms of reflecting the controversies that were in Islamist thinking of the period. Significant criticism was focused on Arab nationalism and socialism together with the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Therefore, Nasser was the most important addressee of these arrows of criticism. This point was strongly emphasized in the article entitled *Gene Ortaşark Harbi [Again Middle East War]* penned in the journal *Hilal*: “Let us first explain how millions of Arabs were defeated by a handful of Jews and why. We would like to focus on one issue before this explanation. All the enemies of Islam, or naïve Muslims who misunderstand Islam, are trying to ascribe the share of this war’s defeat to Islam. Some people say this: ‘How is it also that Muslims, without looking back and scattered like baby hens, can flee, leaving everything to the enemy, so much as weapons and even ships,’ and they add, ‘This situation comes to me very difficultly as a Muslim.’ These expressions give rise to an idea that is the falsest of false. Because what was defeated was not Islam but the Arab tribe; the escapees are not Muslims, they are Arabs.” (Gene Ortaşark Harbi [Again Middle East War], 1967, p. 2). Again, in another article published in the same journal, Salih Özcan says, “What was defeated was not Islam; it was Arab racism and socialism.” (Özcan, 1967, p. 16). These debates are ones not foreign to Islamic thought; in this regard, in fact, it recalls a dominant

discourse from 19th-century Islamism. 19th-century Islamist thought developed a response on the rhetoric directed at the religion of Islam not being able to follow the current developments of the West in science and technology due to reasons sourcing from within itself. According to this, in the case of this backwardness of Muslims, Islam or Muslims who understand the religion literally and apply it are not principally responsible; rather it is those who put these into false practice. In this sense, Islam is far from this type of criticism. The interpretational format that examines the defeat received in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War on the backstay in technological advances and scientific developments, which again we dealt with in the first part of the article in parallel with this, has been voiced in Islamist thought, though rarely (Gene Ortaşark Harbi [Again Middle East War], 1967, p. 3). Criticisms directed at Arab socialism and nationalism have usually been voiced over the leader of the time, Nasser. These ideologies of Nasser for that time in the Middle East were not only in Egypt; they also played an important role in being active throughout the entire Arab world. The self-confidence Nasser felt for himself towards the Israelis before the 1967 Arab-Israeli War also resulted in a big disappointment and led to the Arabs' own loss of confidence in themselves. As a matter of fact, Salih Özcan showed his response in his post penned in *Hilal* by saying, "...Gamal Abdel Nasser, who made the flag of national socialism in the name of Arab nationalism, who for years almost every day hurled his boastings that launched a missile, also made these suffering people hopeful..." (Özcan, 1967, p. 16) Necip Fazıl "...blames through the sale of religion and homeland..." Gemal Abdel Nasser, and in his criticisms in the same post also blamed the Syrian and Jordanian leaders by not limiting it only to Nasser. (Be.De., 1967, p. 10)

### Conclusion

The Palestinian issue has been followed interestedly by Turkish policy maker and society since the very beginning. This situation has paved the way for discussing the issue in many different circles. Not only the Islamists but also the leftist, nationalist or secular thoughts focus on this issue with different approaches. Among them,, the Islamists have had crucial roles at this point in their historical process in Turkey. When the Israel State was established on May 1948 in the Middle East region, the Turkish Islamists didn't accept this fait accompli fact and highlighted the negative effects of this fact on the region. They didn't criticize only the Israel and but also; they criticized Turkish government for the decision of recognizing Israel as a legal state. On the other hand, the Islamist, at that time, share their thoughts about the Palestinian issue with nationalistic arguments mostly. When we look at that time Turkish Islamism and its close relations with Turkish nationalism, this was appropriate approach to the Palestinian issue. Because of that, some Turkish Islamists could criticize easily to the Arab States for their positions and policies at that time. Especially the years of 1960's are turning point for the Islamism in Turkey. On these years Turkish Islamism established more relations with other Islamic countries and these relations influenced the Turkish Islamism' approaches in many ways. When we look at the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and the critics of this war by the Turkish Islamism, we can see these changes and different kind of approaches of new Turkish Islamist discourse. When the Turkish Islamists criticized the Arab states for their separations of Ottoman Empire and some other similar policies in the first Arab-Israeli war, they criticized the Arab states and rulers for their diverging from Islam in the later one at 1967. Also, to need an Islamic Unity had been emphasized more intense by the Turkish Islamist after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. This new agenda of Turkish Islamists developed in parallel with the global Islamic revival and its new discourse. By this way Turkish Islamism can differentiate into new approaches over time easily. I've tried to show this change of approaches over the most important two Arab-Israeli wars. But these changes and continuities in the Turkish Islamism can be followed by many other similar cases through historical process.

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