

The Infiltration of Necropolitics: the Case of Turkey's Holocaust Narratives

La infiltración de la necropolítica: el caso de las narrativas del Holocausto en Turquía

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ABSTRACT

Some memories are more actively cultivated than others, manifesting the obsessive and slippery theaters of contested histories. This may encourage us to explore the ways in which representations of the past are conveyed. While Holocaust awareness has grown globally, its presence in Turkish academia has been limited since the millennium. Recent studies predominantly frame how Turkey integrates the Holocaust within the settled narratives. However, public perception has been shaped by narratives of Turkish consulates saving numerous Turkish Jews from Nazi oppression. This prevalent life-saver theme has become a cornerstone in Holocaust Memory, strengthened by various publications and documentaries. This research mainly investigates Turkey's restrictive border policy and rescuing activities concerning the Jewish migration during the Second World War and its present-day recollections in today's Turkey. Through a detailed case analysis, the study contends that popular historical beliefs differ from the facts. Ultimately it reads these accounts in relation to necropolitics that dictates which memories are allowed to live and which are rendered, emphasizing how even in remembrance, a politics of life and death exists.

Keywords: Collective Memory; Turkish Jews; Holocaust; Necropolitics; Homo Sacer.

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RESUMEN

Algunos recuerdos se cultivan más activamente que otros, manifestando los teatros obsesivos y resbaladizos de las historias disputadas. Esto puede animarnos a explorar las formas en que se transmiten las representaciones del pasado. Aunque la concienciación sobre el Holocausto ha crecido en todo el mundo, su presencia en el mundo académico turco ha sido limitada desde el milenio. Los estudios recientes enmarcan predominantemente el modo en que Turquía integra el Holocausto dentro de las narrativas asentadas. Sin embargo, la percepción pública se ha visto determinada por los relatos de los consulados turcos que salvaron a numerosos judíos turcos de la opresión nazi. Este tema predominante de los salvavidas se ha convertido en una piedra angular de la memoria del Holocausto, reforzada por diversas publicaciones y documentales. Esta investigación estudia principalmente la política fronteriza restrictiva de Turquía y las actividades de salvamento de la migración judía durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial y sus recuerdos actuales en la Turquía de hoy. Mediante un detallado análisis de casos, el estudio sostiene que las creencias históricas populares difieren de los hechos. En última instancia, lee estos relatos en relación con la necropolítica que dicta a qué recuerdos se les permite vivir y cuáles son eliminados, haciendo hincapié en cómo, incluso en el recuerdo, existe una política de vida y muerte.

Palabras clave: Memoria colectiva; judíos turcos; Holocausto; necropolítica; Homo Sacer.

Introduction

Memory is not a static repository of the past but a dynamic entity, constantly evolving and adapting to the present. The collective memory of societies, emerges as a distinct entity, shaped by cultural, social, and even political forces. The stories that societies choose to remember, or more importantly, choose to forget, uncover the intricate interplay between power dynamics and historical reconstructions. Selected narratives, often backed by the dominant political culture are propagated through various means – textbooks, media, rituals, and monuments. Whereas they led forging a cohesive national identity rooted in a shared history, they also legitimize the existing power structures.

This study will first explore the multifaceted dynamics of collective memory, focusing on its evolution from individual recollections to broader societal beliefs. Pointing out the key features like selectivity and distortion, it will demonstrate how power dynamics are associated with the manipulation and reproduction. The case study of the article seeks to question the portrayal of Turkey's role during the Holocaust in mainstream Turkish media. Begin with examining the depiction of Turkey's compassionate stance in popular literary and cinematic works, highlighting their global impact. It will subsequently contrast this dominant narrative with detailed historical examinations, revealing the depth of Turkey's official stance during the Holocaust period. Comparing popular representations with factual accounts, it aims to identify the gaps and overlaps between the two and underline the motivations behind the favorable representation of the past.

Analyzing Turkey's geopolitical and strategic position during the Second World War, the case study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the country's border and migration policies, especially concerning Jewish refugees. Key incidents, like the Struma disaster, will be mentioned to highlight the implications of these policies. This is followed by delineating the bureaucratic restrictions and their implications for Jews of Turkish origin. Drawing a clear distinction between "regular" and "irregular" citizenship statuses, the study will discuss the layered interpretations of Turkey's stance. Expanding upon the distinctions in citizenship status, the consequences of such rigid policies will be shown. By doing so, the study challenges prevailing narratives and suggests the need for a more nuanced understanding of Turkey's actions.

As it applies Agamben's *Homo Sacer* and *necropolitics* to the collective memory, the study will relate these two concepts to the operation of manufactured histories. By examining the role of necropolitics in curating historical narratives to meet contemporary agendas, it urges the profound influence of these power dynamics on the construction and dissemination of shared recollections. The inquiry thus propounds the fabrication of collective memory are interwoven with both concepts, revealing the settled beliefs' power in imposing which stories are elevated and which are silenced.

Literature Review: Tracing the Evolution of Memory

The literature review maps the transition of memory from singular experiences to the societal realm, conceptualized by Maurice Halbwachs. Incorporating perspectives from various scholars, it will later underscore the inherently political nature of memory and reveal how it is subject to processes like selectivity, distortion, invention, and continuity. Concluding the exploration, the intricate concepts of *necropolitics* and *Homo Sacer* will be discussed, underlying the intersection of formation and preservation of collective memory.

While seeking an answer to the question of where we feel at home, Agnes Heller expresses that mother tongue and the state of being able to exist without any effort are predominant. Secondly yet quite crucially, she underlines the importance of silence at no cost: '*Where silence is not threatening, we are certainly at home*' (Heller, 2016, p. 6). As a profession and a primordial bridge to the past, history is the path to be purified in search of heeding Heller's advice. There is one crucial condition for grasping tranquility, nonetheless. Since being historical keeps humans away from constant happiness; Friedrich Nietzsche found the solution for happiness to having a balanced historical sense that relies upon forgetting (Nietzsche, 1980). The term collective memory addresses this complexity that is required in the way we remember 'properly'.

Before its conceptualization as a societal construct, memory was primarily understood as an individual phenomenon, rooted in neurology and psychology until the twentieth century. Marcel Proust's "In Search of Lost Time" demonstrates how sensory experiences can spontaneously evoke vivid memories, illustrating the malleability of human recollection. Similarly, founders of psychoanalysis and analytical psychology, Sigmund Freud, and Carl Gustav Jung, posited that memories form based on psychological needs and unfulfilled desires. Freud concomitantly contended that the human mind orchestrates memory to repress or set aside unresolved matters, discloses that, at times, forgetting can be more functional than remembering (Jeffrey & Robbins, 1998, p. 109).

Breaking from individualistic frameworks, Maurice Halbwachs introduced the concept of collective memory in 1925. He posited that memory is fundamentally a social construct, which is maintained and reconstructed from social interaction. Halbwachs asserted that personal recollections are often influenced, if not shaped, by the perspectives and experiences of the communities to which one belongs. Individuals only define objects relying on how it is seen by others (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 38). Thus, even if the individuals forget or have not experienced the event, its constant circulation helps them to 'remember' (1992, pp. 175-176).

Halbwachs' collective memory concept extends beyond merely social interaction. Physical surroundings, including architectural elements and spatial images, play a crucial role in shaping and preserving collective memories. In his view, each space has meaning only within the context of a specific community, serving as a 'place of memory' that aids in the transmission of collective experiences. Within these frameworks, the groups can reconstruct their memory, in other words, their past, at any time (1992, p. 182).

Drawing inspiration from Halbwachs' pioneering insights, scholars have expanded into the nuances and facets of collective memory. A first exemplar in this taxonomy is Walter Benjamin. Although Benjamin did not explicitly use the concept, its essence permeates his thoughts. Through his 1930s writings, Benjamin notably highlighted the decline of storytelling in modern societies, emphasizing its intrinsic link to authentic experience. In "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov," he observed that war veterans returned not with stories to tell, but with an evident absence of shareable experiences (Benjamin, 2006, p. 362). For Benjamin, stories differ from mere facts; they encapsulate experiences and release their strength over time (Fowler, 2005).

Benjamin emphasizes that storytelling, as an art of repetition, endures only if it resonates with an audience and lingers in memory (Benjamin, 2006, p. 367). An illustration of this concept is Johann Peter Hebel's "Unexpected Reunion" from 1811. In this tale, a woman's fiancée works in the Falun mines, tragically dying just a day before their wedding. Despite this, she decides to remain faithful to him throughout her life. As years pass and she ages, one day an incorrupt body emerges, which she identifies as her fiancée, leading to her subsequent death. Meanwhile, some major historical events were taking place (2006, p. 362):

In the meantime, Lisbon was destroyed by an earthquake, the Seven Years' War concluded, Empress Maria Theresa and Emperor Joseph passed away, America became independent, the French Revolution began, and Napoleon captured Prussia. But when in 1806, the miners at Falun ..¹

As demonstrated, a story is often conveyed from a limited perspective, constructed by its narrator's and audience's interests. Consequently, many other concurrent events and stories fade into the background. Battles, the demise of empires, revolutions, and other parallel occurrences become nothing more than insignificant "details" within the tapestry of another narrative.

Building on the idea of narrative selectivity and the significance of certain events over others, we now turn to another dimension of collective memory: the tangible mechanisms that ensure its preservation and transmission. Paul Connerton provides insights into these mediums, emphasizing their role in connecting communities to their histories. While Halbwachs emphasized the sociocultural underpinnings of collective memory, Connerton critiqued him for overlooking the tangible mechanisms ensuring its continuity across generations. (Connerton, 1989, p. 38). He thus claims two mediums by which this transfer is chiefly facilitated: commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices. In essence, religious rituals like the Jewish festivals of Shavuot and Sukkoth or the Islamic practice of Ramadan fasting serve as vivid illustration (1989, pp. 46-48). These ceremonies employ performative actions, such as cursing and oath-taking, creating an 'official language' that solidifies group identity. More importantly, the persistent practice of these rituals reaffirms not just tradition but also a collective connection to the past, often externalized through re-enactments (1989).

Adding another layer to the discussion, Jan Assmann builds upon Halbwachs' concept of shared oral traditions and Aby Warburg's idea of shared imagery to formulate a comprehensive notion of cultural memory, which includes linguistic, pictorial, and ritualistic elements (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995, p. 129). This framework essentially aligns with Connerton's observations but adds other important facets such as written texts and other performative actions. Assmann furthers Halbwachs' ideas by introducing the term 'cultural frames,' which encompass various elements that trigger collective memories, like landscapes, texts, and festivals. These cultural frames do not inherently 'possess' memory but serve as catalysts that evoke memories people have invested in them (Assmann, 2011, pp. 17-18).

1 "In the meantime, the city of Lisbon was destroyed by an earthquake, and the Seven Years' War came and went, and Emperor Francis I died, and the Jesuit Order was abolished, and Poland was partitioned, and Empress Maria Theresa died, and Struensee was executed. America became independent, and the united French and Spanish forces were unable to capture Gibraltar. The Turks locked up General Stein in the Veteraner Cave in Hungary, and Emperor Joseph died also. King Gustavus of Sweden conquered Russian Finland, and the French Revolution and the long war began, and Emperor Leopold II went to his grave too. Napoleon captured Prussia, and the English bombarded Copenhagen, and the peasants sowed and harvested. The millers ground, the smiths hammered, and the miners dug for veins of ore in their underground workshops. But when in 1806 the miners at Falun ..", *ibid*, p. 369.

What's worth remembering and what is not?

The complexities of collective memory inherently lay in selectivity, as its persistence relies on both remembering and forgetting. When it comes to factuality, memory differs from historical knowledge. Regarding this, Assmann underlines the difference:

“... What counts is not the past as it is investigated and reconstructed by archaeologists and historians but only the past as it is remembered. Whereas knowledge has no form and is endlessly cumulative, memory involves forgetting” (2011, p. 19).

Assmann's distinction shows that memory is shaped by both what is retained and what is left behind by setting it apart from the objective accumulation of history. Hence remembering the past collectively entails societies to retrieve their own 'past'. As Halbwachs claims, it is almost inevitable that while group members reconstruct the past, they most frequently distort it (Halbwachs, p. 182). Prior to discussion of the aspects of forgetting, it is important to consider the mechanisms through which collective memory is transmitted. Peter Burke categorizes the transmission of social memory into five facets: oral traditions, written records, visual symbols like monuments, ritual actions, and the influence of space (Burke, 1997, pp. 47-48). Burke suggests that reading memory texts provides only a transformed viewpoint, with visual symbols playing an instrumental role in shaping national memory. Rituals become cornerstones of identity formation. Here, he exemplifies Roger Bastide's observation on Afro-American slaves, noting that even displaced groups, can retain and rebuild their collective memories, challenging the strict spatial anchoring proposed by Halbwachs (1997, p. 49).

While the channels of memory transmission are pivotal, it is equally essential to address the facets of collective forgetting. We thus now shift our focus on the deliberate silences and omissions within societies. The selective nature of course does not only appear in remembering the things. Burke also addresses 'Social Amnesia,' (1997), where societies sometimes choose to overlook their past. In some cases, societies prefer not to dig into their own past as seen in Spain. While modern school textbooks scarcely mention the Civil War, there is not yet a major war museum in Madrid, the heart of Franco's Spain and the capital of today's Spain. Helen Graham highlights the challenges of researching this period, given Franco's portrayal of the war as a "liberation" and the prevalent societal reluctance to confront its bloody past (Graham, 2005, pp. 138-150).

The elasticity of memory and its distortive tendencies is another primary component of societal oblivion. Here, distortion appears as the predominant element. Micheal Schudson's views on how memory distorts over time introduce the idea that memories are not just selective but malleable. He categorizes these functions into four: Distanciation, Instrumentalization, Narrativization, and Cognitivation and Conventionalization (Schudson, 1995). Time can amplify memories of certain historical events due to the fading of details and emotions. For example, the Holocaust's full

recognition took decades. Secondly, memory often distorts facts to fit present-day narratives, like how the Kalevala, an “ancient” Finnish epic, was crafted from unrelated poems to bolster national identity. Furthermore, narratives are chosen for their compelling nature, sometimes altering historical realities. The diary of Anne Frank, for instance, frames the Dutch as Nazi victims, while the Netherlands was one of the easiest collaborators of the Nazis. Similarly, while Austrians comprised a large portion of Nazi camp soldiers, the popular movie “The Sound of Music (1965)” portrayed Austria as another victimized nation. Lastly, Conventionalization, such as monumentalizing, invents a chronological tradition where the past earns its justification (1995, pp. 348-360).

Considering these factors, collective memory plays a key role in nation-building, deeply intertwined within the social and political landscape. Symbols, from anthems, and monuments to commemorations, anchor these shared histories (Santos, 2001, p. 3). However, memory's interpretation varies by societal needs; for instance, while 8 August 1945 celebrates the West's liberation from Nazis, it refers to the Soviet occupation that began on a subsequent day for the Eastern European countries (Diner, 2011, p. 47). How are chosen of the facts is the core of the memory. For the rest, memory relatively emerges, victory or defeat, it, either way, finds itself a way to be strengthened. Eric Hobsbawm acutely states that *“If there is no suitable past, it can always be invented, since the past legitimizes”* (Hobsbawm, 1998, p. 5).

This ‘formalized’ past nonetheless does not always seek an invention that has never existed at all, its reconstruction is sometimes based on forgetting or abandoning certain facts (Hobsbawm, pp. 10-11) The House of Terror Museum in Budapest demonstrates this functionality. Ignoring its role in the Jewish deportations, it only depicts Hungary's sufferings by wartime fascism and postwar communism (Erbelding, 2016, p. 184).

As the final compound of memory crafting in our discussion, Pierre Nora pays special attention to the physical anchors and tangible markers that solidify national values and settled beliefs within societies. In his exploration of memory's preservation, Nora introduced the concept of ‘Realms of Memory.’ He emphasizes that memory is not preserved by itself, it rather relies on tangible markers like museums, monuments, textbooks, and national holidays to endure (Nora, 1989). These realms, extending to written records like history textbooks and declarations, anchor historical memory and fortify collective identity. While they reinforce national identity, Nora contends that this preserved history takes on a sacred dimension for nation-states (Nora, 1989). He insightfully points out that memory is less a factual source and more a tool for shaping the present: *“The past could always be resuscitated by an effort of remembrance; indeed, the present itself became a sort of recycled, up-dated past* (Nora, 1989 p. 16).” To sum up, he mainly states that memory serves as a constructed portrayal of the past, gaining legitimacy when utilized, remains inherently meaningless, otherwise (Nora, 1989, p. 11).

How Power Manifests Itself in Collective Memory

We have so far discussed the multifaceted features of memory which inherently embody processes such as selectivity, forgetting, distortion, invention, and continuity. Above all, memory is essentially embedded in politics, for it is subject to selectivity, amnesia, fabrication. This influence reflects the broader dynamics of power, showing how authority can mold and distort it. The last station of our investigation is the pathway to explore how these dynamics of power and manipulation of memory interact with concepts of subjectivity and control.

Etienne Copeaux argues for the necessity of interdisciplinary approaches to studying history, which can reveal the deep connections between daily experiences and routines and key socio-political aspects such as state ideologies, nationalistic sentiments, and evolved patterns. It pays special attention to the images, speeches, and commemorations of daily life routines in which the past is represented, made, and unmade in the process of nation-making. Providing a 'shared knowledge' creates a legitimate collective memory in which political language and historical understanding are transmitted and reproduced. He also argues the fact that the less visible elements might potentially provide multi-layered dynamics to understand both the political mythology mechanics and the reflections of representation of the past in daily life (Copeaux, 2018, pp. 77-88).

Bridging the theoretical dimensions of memory and the mechanisms of power, it becomes evident how power mechanisms interplay with our engagement with the past, highlighting the profound impact of shared knowledge and collective memory on societal frameworks. Today, while the power-subject relationship is chiefly shaped through the disciplinary and transformative elements of authority, it has been discussed over many concepts. Michel Foucault's critical contribution in understanding the control mechanism, *biopolitics*, has long been considered an efficient apparatus of the modern nation state. Biopolitical sovereignty seeks to purify its nation by eliminating incompatible citizens from every stratum of the society (Foucault, 2008). Giorgio Agamben remarks that the widespread suspension of the law, existing as state of exception, is the defining aspect of modern biopolitics. In engaging with marginalized groups in the society, he underlines the distinctive practices through legislation and societal cohesion that exclude citizens whose lives reduce the '*homo sacer*' (Agamben, 1998). The concept represents the individuals who are omitted from the legal system's protection, living in a state of "bare life". It should be noted that, the exclusion from society does not necessarily mean total abandonment. It is a multifaceted, active process, indeed. Abandoned individuals are paradoxically included within the sovereign power: included through exclusion (Pratt, 2005, p. 1054).

In this power-subject network, death also emerges as the primary instrument that helps us understand its relationship with the sovereign power. Achille Mbembe encourages us perceiving the state of exception as the realms of politics where the superior power of death over life is centered. He therefore posits that death by itself is a supremely politicized instrument of necropolitical

power (Mbembe, 2003). Not merely as a survival instinct but as a catalyst it serves to promote authority attained through the dissemination of terror. As the world of the living is intertwined with death, meanings, symbols, and affiliations are constantly reproduced. Here, necropolitics associated with the regulation of death explores various ways how historical perception is deployed politically based on today's needs (Osuri, 2008). These concepts crucially point out the key features of the undertaking of past reconstruction and fabricated discourses of victimhood that need to be addressed in the nation-making process.

Necropolitics and Homo Sacer are closely linked concepts in dealing with how the power of death operates over life. *Homo Sacer* is the living embodiment or manifestation of necropolitical power in that regard. When individuals or groups are treated as Homo Sacer, it is a clear indication that necropolitics is at play. According to Mbembe, "*Sovereignty means the capacity to define who matters and who does not, who is disposable and who is not* (Mbembe, 2003, p. 27)." Both terms thereby expanded from the individuals to the field of collective memory. For instance, examining the roadside memorials built upon drunk driving deaths concerning their cultural politics influence, Bednar claims they have become dominant cultural forces over time (Bednar, 2013, p.340). In this context, he finds relevance in necropolitics as it illuminates how memories are cultivated, preserved, or suppressed within society. The shrines and memorials of the public turn into sacred places that create a common sense that imposes on who is worth publicly remembered and who is not (Bednar, 2013, p. 351).

From Forgetting to Purification

This section examines the response of the Turkish government to the increasing Jewish migration, particularly amplified by the onset of war. Firstly, governmental measures and migration policy will be examined. It shall touch upon the key Turkish policies framed in response, provide insights into the numbers of refugees who managed to pass through Turkey and highlight events like the Struma incident to illustrate Turkey's border policy. Secondly, the situation of Turkish Jews living in Nazi-occupied France will be the focal point. In doing so, the study applies some statistical data for a better understanding. Finally, it will compare the findings with the established narratives while seeking the actuality of what is known in collective memory.

In recent years, a collection of prominent Turkish publications, both literary and cinematic, have painted a vivid picture, buttressing the nation's compassionate role during the Holocaust. Ayşe Kulin's internationally acclaimed novel "*Nefes Nefese*", *Last Train to Istanbul*, portrays Turkish diplomats heroically rescuing Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. The work, which blends historical events with gripping storytelling, has found its way into the hands of global readers thanks to translations in numerous languages. (Kulin, 2002) In a similar fashion, Emir Kıvırcık's *Büyükelçi* narrates the valorous efforts of Behiç Erkin, the Turkish ambassador in France during the turbu-

lent war years (Kıvırcık, 2007). Both are intertwined with elements of drama and history, have been translated into numerous languages, making them accessible to a global audience and disseminating Turkey's benevolent stance. Additionally, documentaries like "Desperate Hours" and the award-winning "Turkish Passport" serve as visual testaments to the commendable actions of Turkish officials during World War II through interviews, archival footage, and survivor testimonies. Together, these works craft a narrative that resonates deeply: Turkish authorities put their lives into jeopardy to aid and shelter the Jewish community when other nations turned a blind eye.

Historically, the narrative put forth is one of benevolence, drawing parallels between the Ottoman Empire's welcoming attitude towards the Jews in 1492 and Turkey's alleged efforts during the Holocaust. Notably, it has recently been that detailed studies on Holocaust and Turkish Jewry have surfaced. Whereas the life-saver theme has prevailed, only a few studies sought to investigate the historical depths of such settled narratives concerning the official stance of Turkey. Despite its low repercussions either in history textbooks or academia, the Holocaust has increasingly captured notable attention over the last two decades (Dost & Aytürk, 2016, p. 257). While global awareness and discussions on the subject have intensified, Turkey has been occupied in reinforcing and promoting its own narrative and understanding of Holocaust.

Turkey's Role in the Jewish Exodus from Wartime Europe

In the tumultuous interwar period of Europe, Jewish communities faced escalating challenges, particularly with the rise of the Nazi party in 1933. The Nazis, shortly after assuming power, introduced sweeping reforms, excluding Jews from many professional sectors, and intensifying anti-Semitic sentiments. Over time, hostility towards Jews escalated, manifesting in boycotts, raids, and both verbal and physical abuse. This hostile environment spurred a massive exodus, with nearly half a million Jews departing from the Greater Reich before World War II (Ofer, 1984, pp. 159). Turkey was not among the countries the Jews wished to come during the same period, nonetheless. It instead saw an exodus of its non-Muslim population, driven by its own set of discriminatory policies in the 1930s² (Guttstadt, 2018).

For many of these Jewish refugees, Palestine, a region at the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea then under the British Mandate, emerged as the preferred sanctuary, accessible primarily through the Mediterranean route. However, 1940's geopolitical shifts, including Nazi's occupation of France and Italy's alignment with Germany, sealed off this passage (Bahar, 2018, p. 72). With the Mediterranean route blocked, Turkey's strategic position as a transit point to Palestine became even more critical. The policies of the Turkish government, in this context, were now pivotal for Jewish refugees.

² As Guttstadt states, Turkey hosted approximately 600 Jews who mostly stayed for a quite short time no more than two years in this period. Considering the total number of refugees, this figure clearly shows how Turkey had been seen by the Jewish emigrants. Guttstadt, Corry—*Turkish Responses to the Holocaust: Ankara's Policy toward the Jews, 1933–1945*, Nazism, the Holocaust, and the Middle East: Arab and Turkish Responses, Vermont studies on Nazi Germany and the Holocaust, Berghahn Books, 2018, pp. 42-77; p. 59.

Starting in January 1938, Turkey began fortifying its borders, setting policies that specifically targeted Jewish migration. Initially, these restrictions were placed on Romanian Jews seeking refuge from rising anti-Semitism, only allowing them in for transit purposes. The restrictions soon expanded, post the Nazi annexation of Austria, to include Hungarian Jews (2018, pp. 73-74). Collaborating covertly with the Nazis, they introduced a clandestine mark on passports, indicating the holder's faith. To obtain a visa, one now had to present proof of their Aryan descent (Guttstadt, 2008, pp. 186-188; Bahar, 2013, p. 24). This law, kept away from public view in official bulletins, effectively closed Turkish borders for Jews coming from countries like Germany, Romania, Hungary, Austria, and Czechoslovakia, severely limiting the number of Jewish refugees entering Turkey in the subsequent two years (Bahar, 2018, pp. 75-76). One of the critical milestones of the period was that reports of atrocities targeting Jews reached Turkish officials by December 1941, confirming their awareness of the Holocaust by the year's end (2018, p. 77).

In summary, between 1940 and 1944, a total of 11,469 Jewish refugees managed to transit through Turkey en route to Palestine (Bahar, 2014, p. 289). It must be underlined the fact that nearly half of these permissions were issued in 1944 by the time the Nazi's defeat became evident. Except for a brief period from September 1940 to May 1941, which saw over 4,000 refugees, it is plausible to claim that Turkey's overarching policy was one of limited assistance, granting passage to as few Jewish refugees as possible (Bahar, 2018, pp. 80-81).

Having outlined the prevailing measures of the era, it is crucial to transition from the broader context to specific incidents reflecting the constrictive policies. The Struma disaster serves as a haunting testament to the outcomes of these restrictive border policies. In December 1941, the ship Struma, carrying 769 Romanian Jews, set sail from Konstanca. Despite encountering engine problems, it reached Istanbul's Bosphorus, where the passengers sought visas for Palestine. The ship remained anchored for over two months and with no visas or permission to land in Istanbul granted, with 300 children, half under age 15, and 200 women (Bali, 2001, p. 183). On February 24th, the malfunctioning Struma was expelled from the Bosphorus. Shortly after, it was hit by a Soviet torpedo near Istanbul's northern coast, sinking rapidly and leaving only one survivor.

The disaster cannot be attributed to Turkey alone; both the British government's visa denial and the Romanian government's refusal to repatriate the refugees exacerbated the situation. Aftermath, Turkey bolstered its border security measures, driven by worries that any flexibility could potentially attract a larger influx of refugees (Ofer, 1999, p. 165). Allied powers to propose two solutions in 1943: the creation of temporary refugee camps in Turkey or aiding the refugees' journey to Palestine using Turkish ships. Ankara declined both offers, however (Bahar, 2018, pp. 77-80).

After investigating the strict border policy vis-à-vis migration wave, the exploration of Turkey's approach towards its Jewish citizens in the European theatre of the war will take us one step closer to grasping the mindset behind Ankara's decisions. The nuances of Turkey's stance towards its Jewish citizens, particularly those living in Europe during World War II, will be another key point in terms of policies and actions. Central to this examination is the 1928 Turkish citizenship law, which conferred upon the government the authority to revoke citizenship based on certain criteria. Primarily, it targeted those who did not participate in the Independence War and individuals living abroad who failed to register with consulates for five years. This legislation, coupled with subsequent policies, played a pivotal role in shaping Ankara's response to its Jewish diaspora, especially those residing mainly in war-torn France. The foreign ministry revoked the citizenship of those failing to meet the registration requirements by becoming '*irregular citizen*', while compliant individuals maintained their "*regular citizen*" status.

The distinction between 'regular' and 'irregular' citizens not only impacted their status but also led to various interpretations and debates about Turkey's wartime responsibilities in literature. Stanford Shaw paints a commendable picture of Turkey within this context. Citing archival evidence, he emphasizes how Turkish diplomats risked their lives in France, producing forged documents to protect both "regular" and "irregular" Turkish Jews, particularly post-1942 by the time Nazi atrocities targeting the Jews became known (Shaw, 1993, pp. 60-61). Briefly, he contends that Ankara began to overlook the distinction between regular and irregular citizenships, resulting in efforts to rescue thousands of Jews from the clutches of the Nazis (1993, p. 206).

Contrastingly, İzzet Bahar offers a more critical view, investigating the consequences of the aforementioned citizenship law. He argues that "irregular" status placed many in jeopardy, leading to their eventual deportation to concentration camps. Using documented evidence, he provides instances where Turkish diplomats declined protection for "irregular" citizens, despite the awareness of mass deportations (Bahar, 2014, p. 86). A striking statistic in this discourse is that between March 1942 and July 1944, out of approximately 13,500 Jews of Turkish origin in Europe, only 414 were recognized by January 1944 (2014, p. 169), while 1,515 met tragic fates in concentration camps (2014, p. 170). Such numbers, juxtaposed with individual stories, like that of war veteran families unable to protect their own (2014, p. 88-89), exemplify the intricacies of Turkey's stance during this tumultuous era.

Deportations and Denaturalizations

As discussed, the distinction between "regular" and "irregular" citizens had profound implications, especially for Jews of Turkish origin in Europe. Corry Guttstadt's comprehensive examination reveals the extent of Turkey's involvement in these matters and helps discern its role in this period. Her findings reveal that from 1940 to 1944, 3,445 individuals, predominantly Jews

from France, were denaturalized (Guttstadt, 2006). Reasons varied, from non-participation in the Independence War to failing consulate registration. The years 1943 and 1944 are particularly noteworthy because Turkey was then aware of the Nazi's systemic deportations, making the denaturalizations even more significant (Guttstadt, 2018, p. 63). Out of the total denaturalizations during this period, a staggering 90% were Jews from France (2006, p.56). She also elucidates the somewhat arbitrary application of the citizenship law. Several Jews, either infants or not even born during the Independence War, had their citizenships revoked because of non-participation in the war (2006, p. 52).

In 1944, the correlation between denaturalizations and deportations became clear. İzzet Bahar's records suggest that around 1,515 Jews of Turkish origin in France faced deportation between March 1942 and July 1944. Guttstadt estimates that nearly 3,000 Turkish Jews in Europe were deported during the war, most with perishing (Guttstadt, 2008, p. 515). However, this number might be higher due to incomplete records or deaths in labor camps and executions that went unrecorded. Tragically, many of these Jews had ancestral roots in Turkish territories. Yet, they were rendered outsiders. These figures highlight the disparity between the popular narrative of Turkey as a Jewish savior during the Holocaust and the historical evidence presented. While collective memory portrays Turkey in a favorable way, the detailed studies examined suggest a contrary approach.

To conclude, this section has examined firstly the border policy, driven by the potential migration wave concerns. From 1940 to 1944, 11,469 Jews managed to transit through Turkey to Palestine. However, the prevailing approach of the Turkish government was to limit such transit permissions as possible, though Palestine was their final route. The consequences of the rigid policy are also illustrated by the Struma disaster, which caused 768 killings combined, including a significant number of children and women. Additionally, Turkish authorities largely remained silent when asked to repatriate Jews of Turkish origin in the Nazi-occupied territories. Out of nearly 15000 Turkish Jews, only 414, classified as 'regular citizens', were allowed to enter Turkey.

Secondly, the denaturalization of a few thousand Jews has been assessed within this context. The denaturalization policies profoundly affected the Jewish community in war zone Europe, especially during the critical years of 1943 and 1944. This corresponds with the escalation of Nazi atrocities, suggesting a potential indifference or disregard on the part of Turkish authorities to the escalating horrors.

Lastly, many of those deported and subjected to denaturalization were individuals with deep-rooted ties to Turkish territories. The fact that some of them were children or young adults during the armistice period sheds light on the tragedy of their circumstances. Yet, there is no existing documentation or memorial to acknowledge this sorrowful episode of history (Guttstadt, 2006, p. 56). Mainstream historical knowledge unveils an obvious disconnect, leading us to question the broader complexities of political mythology.

Conclusion

The study has inspected the evolution of memory from individual perceptions to societal frameworks, indicating its vulnerability to distortion, manipulation, and invention. Through a careful examination of border policies, the research has shown that Turkey's approach was predominantly restrictive, with the Struma disaster serving as a tragic testament to its implications. This has been followed by the profound impact of denaturalization policies on Jews, especially during the pivotal years of 1943 and 1944. The study has further revealed the juxtaposition of contradicting historical beliefs, to call into question rooted perceptions of manufactured histories.

For some dark spots in the past, denial is a very practical channel to cope with. Remembering is unbearable, otherwise. Once it is purified/sanitized through various processes, the past is cultivated into the collective memory so that it can be recycled for good. For instance, certain controversial episodes of twentieth-century Turkey, have mainly been represented as either hardship faced by Muslim Turks or perceived disloyalties during the armistice. The greater part of the picture which contains opposing parties' arguments, facts, and documents disappeared as if nothing had happened. Whereas one-sided agonies and painful memories are enthusiastically represented in a biased form, the 'outers' agonies are ignored. That is to say, the past can now proudly be remembered as well as devoted to the nation.

Turkey's collective memory regarding its interactions with the Jews emphasizes several positive aspects: the open arms of Sultan Bayezid II in 1492 to Jews expelled from Spain, the hiring of German-Jewish professors in the 1930s, and the purported rescuing efforts by Turkish diplomats for Jews during WWII. This study critically has appraised the last portrayal, uncovering a more complex narrative of Turkey's policies during interwar and WWII. While certain Turkish consulates in Europe displayed acts of humanity, the overarching stance from Ankara contributed to the tragic deaths of approximately 3,000 Jews in concentration camps. Many of these Jews had initially migrated to France in the early years of the Turkish Republic due to Turkification policies. However, contemporary portrayals in media have embedded the more benevolent narrative in public memory.

A necropolitical practice here can shed light on this operation. In her investigation into the deployment of necropolitics in places of state exception for certain deceased individuals in Turkey, Chile, and Argentina, Ege Selin İskekel puts forward that death is no longer a category of nature but has become an element of power. Shortly, the total neglect first begins with the abduction of people with apparent impunity. This is followed by improper burial practices of the kidnapped such as mass graving, immolating, and airdropping by aiming to erase the memory of the disappeared. Eventually, the prohibition of funeral and mourning practices causes total disposal that avails to erase the memory of the deceased. In other words, even death itself hardly finds a place to be acknowledged (İskekel, 2017).

Ultimately, this study argues that certain memories, histories, or narratives may become *Homo Sacer* within our shared remembrance, without it being seen as a violation or distortion of the facts. These can be erased, forgotten, or distorted often without societal objection or even realization. Similarly, by choosing what to preserve and what to destroy, power—not necessarily state power, as Mbembe urges—can control the ‘life’ and ‘death’ of past narratives. This tailored recollection can either resurrect forgotten histories or silence significant events, determining which memory must ‘die’ and which memory may ‘live.’

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