

# *Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies*



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## **Mission**

ATINER is an Athens-based World Association of Academics and Researchers based in Athens. ATINER is an independent and non-profit Association with a Mission to become a forum where Academics and Researchers from all over the world can meet in Athens, exchange ideas on their research and discuss future developments in their disciplines, as well as engage with professionals from other fields. Athens was chosen because of its long history of academic gatherings, which go back thousands of years to Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum. Both these historic places are within walking distance from ATINER's downtown offices. Since antiquity, Athens was an open city. In the words of Pericles, Athens "...is open to the world, we never expel a foreigner from learning or seeing". ("Pericles' Funeral Oration", in Thucydides, The History of the Peloponnesian War). It is ATINER's mission to revive the glory of Ancient Athens by inviting the World Academic Community to the city, to learn from each other in an environment of freedom and respect for other people's opinions and beliefs. After all, the free expression of one's opinion formed the basis for the development of democracy, and Athens was its cradle. As it turned out, the Golden Age of Athens was in fact, the Golden Age of the Western Civilization. Education and (Re)searching for the 'truth' are the pillars of any free (democratic) society. This is the reason why Education and Research are the two core words in ATINER's name.

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# Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies

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The current issue is the fourth of the seventh volume of the *Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies (AJMS)*, published by the [Athens Institute for Education and Research](#).

Gregory T. Papanikos  
President  
ATINER





## Athens Institute for Education and Research

### *A World Association of Academics and Researchers*

#### 15<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Mediterranean Studies

11-14 April 2022, Athens, Greece

The [Center for European & Mediterranean Affairs](https://www.atiner.gr/2022/FORM-MDT.doc) organizes the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Mediterranean Studies, 11-14 April 2022, Athens, Greece sponsored by the [Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies](https://www.atiner.gr/2022/FORM-MDT.doc). The aim of the conference is to bring together academics and researchers from all areas of Mediterranean Studies, such as history, arts, archaeology, philosophy, culture, sociology, politics, international relations, economics, business, sports, environment and ecology, etc. You may participate as stream leader, presenter of one paper, chair a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (<https://www.atiner.gr/2022/FORM-MDT.doc>).

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#### Important Dates

- Abstract Submission: **13 September 2021**
- Submission of Paper: **14 March 2022**

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- Social Dinner
- Mycenae Visit
- Exploration of the Aegean Islands
- Delphi Visit
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### **20<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Politics** **13-16 June 2022, Athens, Greece**

The [Politics & International Affairs Unit](#) of the ATINER will hold its **20<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Politics, 13-16 June 2022, Athens, Greece** sponsored by the [Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies](#) and the [Athens Journal of Social Sciences](#). The aim of the conference is to bring together academics, researchers and professionals in private and public organizations and governments of Politics and International Affairs and other related disciplines. You may participate as stream leader, presenter of one paper, chair of a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (<https://www.atiner.gr/2022/FORM-POL.doc>).

#### **Important Dates**

- Abstract Submission: **15 November 2021**
- Acceptance of Abstract: 4 Weeks after Submission
- Submission of Paper: **16 May 2022**

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- **Dr. Yannis Stivachtis**, Director, [Center for European & Mediterranean Affairs](#) and Associate Professor, Jean Monnet Chair & Director of International Studies Program, Virginia Tech – Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, USA.

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More information can be found here: <https://www.atiner.gr/social-program>

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## Turkey's Game Plan in Northern Syria and its Implications for the EU

By Zafer Kizilkaya<sup>\*</sup>, Sofie Hamdi<sup>±</sup> & Mohammad Salman<sup>°</sup>

*Throughout the civil war, the Syrian opposition has been politically and militarily supported by several countries. At present, with its boots on the ground, Turkey is the main backer of the armed opposition in northern Syria. In the region, Ankara envisions a long-term presence which is characterized by a continuous control along the M-4 highway from Idlib in the west to the Iraqi border in the east. This will depend, however, on Turkey's negotiations with Russia and its relations with the US. Meanwhile, the EU has limited its engagement with Ankara, by mainly focusing on the refugee crisis. Yet, divergent views and contesting interests are hindering an effective cooperation between the two on the Syrian "dossier". In light of this, this paper argues that the EU should broaden its perspectives, while establishing permanent contact with Turkey. This necessitates the continuation of the EU's financial support given to Ankara to host refugees; the backing of Turkey in maintaining a frozen conflict situation in Idlib; the increase of diplomatic engagement in the provision of humanitarian aid; the backing of any effort that aims at ending the hostilities and establishing ceasefires; and the showing of empathy towards Turkish concerns on border security and terrorism.*

**Keywords:** Syrian crisis, Turkey, European Union, Northern Syria, humanitarian aid

### Introduction

The Syrian civil war has confronted Turkey with serious security challenges, reminiscent of similar tendencies in the years following the first and the second Gulf war. During the chaotic years in Iraq, Turkey faced a flow of refugees, its security and military establishment became increasingly apprehensive about the emergence of an independent Kurdish entity next to its border and Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) conducted several cross-border operations against Partîya Karkerên Kurdistanê (PKK) (Ata 2008). In that period, Turkey's diplomatic actions prioritized continuous negotiations with Western officials, while it refrained from unilateral actions (Canci and Sen 2011, p. 41). In the Syrian conflict, however, Ankara did not refrain from acting unilaterally. In fact, Turkey wanted to take measures with or without partners and established a permanent presence on the north Syrian soil, despite conflicting the trans-Atlantic interests and a strong condemnation of the West (European Parliament 2019, Yesiltas 2020).

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Turkey's first military operation in Syria was launched in August 2016. According to Ataman and Ozdemir (2018)<sup>1</sup>, what changed in 2016 were not the fixed objectives in Turkey's Syrian policy, but the priorities among them (2018). The unchanged objectives were: "managing the humanitarian crisis, materializing the fall of the Assad regime, aiding the opposition forces, waging a proxy war with Iran, eliminating the threat of Daesh, and preventing the PYD/YPG<sup>2</sup> from creating an area of dominance" (Ataman and Ozdemir 2018, p. 13). The initial policies prioritized the realization of the first three, while countering Iran was of secondary importance. Over the years, the presence of terrorist organizations and in particular the existence of a PYD-led Administration across its border became the key concern (2018, p. 18). Moreover, the humanitarian perspective of the early years, in the view of Ataman and Ozdemir, became replaced by a realist approach which is characterized by an increased militarist policy in Syria (Ataman and Ozdemir 2018, p. 31).

Without delving too much into the history of Turkey's involvement in the Syrian war, this research report seeks to shed light on Ankara's objectives and long-term strategy in northern Syria. A distinction is made between the dynamics in the west and the east of the Euphrates River, where Turkey confronts different actors whether militarily or diplomatically. After explaining Turkey's actions and plans in the Operation Euphrates Shield (OES) zone, Afrin and Idlib, the paper will decipher Turkey's game plan in the region between Tell Abyad and Ras al-Ayn — in the east of the Euphrates River. Here, Turkey is not satisfied with the current status quo and the Turkish army continues shelling SDF<sup>3</sup>/YPG positions. Finally, the paper will conclude by indicating the potential implications for the EU and by offering concrete policy proposals to implement when engaging Turkey on the "Syrian dossier".

## **Turkey in the West of the Euphrates River**

### *Euphrates Shield and Afrin Regions*

Turkey's first military operation in Syria, Operation Euphrates Shield (OES), started on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August 2016. In seven months and with the participation of nearly 4,000 regular army troops and 7,000 fighters from the Free Syrian Army (FSA), Turkey managed to establish a control between Azaz and Jarablus, 91 km in width, extending further south to Al-Bab, 30 km in depth (Yesiltas et al. 2017, p. 22). The operation was aimed at eliminating the presence of Daesh in the vicinity of the Turkish-Syrian border and obstructing PYD's ambitions to annex its autonomous control in the east of the Euphrates with the one in Afrin.

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<sup>1</sup>Researchers affiliated with SETA: The Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research, a think-tank with close ties to Turkish President Erdogan's AKP.

<sup>2</sup>Democratic Union Party/Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat (PYD) and its military wing, People's Protection Units /Yekîneyên Parastina Gel (YPG).

<sup>3</sup>Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) is a coalition of armed groups in north-eastern Syria and led by YPG.

Initially, the US-led anti-Daesh coalition provided some support to the operation, yet, they became more reluctant when Turkey advanced towards the M-4 highway, captured Al-Bab and set its sights on Manbij (Kasapoglu 2017). Meanwhile, Russia and Iran prioritized the re-control of Aleppo and remained neutral regarding Turkey's advancement towards the city of Al-Bab, before PYD/YPG could take control. This was mainly in exchange for Turkey's cease of aid to rebel groups in eastern Aleppo (Balanche 2017).

At present, the security situation in the OES zone is somewhat stable, but terror attacks continue targeting civilians and armed groups, particularly in Al-Bab which witnesses sporadic explosions (SYRIAHR 2020). Moreover, the city is critically located on the M-4 highway and the pro-regime forces are only kilometres away from the city center. To the west and east, the armed forces of the PYD-led Administration, the SDF/YPG, control the ground in the cities of Manbij and Tell Rifat. Maintaining territorial control in Al-Bab is thus highly critical for Turkey in order to hinder an enlargement in favour of the Syrian army in Aleppo, while preventing any PYD attempt to connect Tell Rifat to Manbij.

Military-wise, both Tell Rifat and Manbij have long been on the target list of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF). In the short to medium term, however, an imminent operation against these cities are not expected since both Russia and the Syrian government keep a watchful eye on the developments there. For Damascus, the presence of PYD/YPG in Tell Rifat are considered to provide a buffer between the Syrian Army and the Turkish-backed opposition armed groups, hence contributing to the security in the north of Aleppo city. Manbij, as another PYD controlled city, is the "key to east" for the Syrian government, as the city is located on a route connecting Aleppo to Raqqa and Hasakah (Balanche 2019).

Turkey's second offensive in the city of Afrin in January 2018, was more controversial than the incursion in 2016. In particular, Turkey's approach of targeting the "Kurds" in Syria generated more criticism at the EU-level, which demanded Turkey to prioritize the fight against the UN-recognized terror groups — Daesh, Al-Nusra and other Al-Qaeda like-minded groups (Ayhan 2018). Turkey, however, considered capturing Afrin and thereby eliminating the YPG/PKK<sup>4</sup> from its border as a vital security interest (Yesiltas 2018).

In those days, Russia and Iran were fighting alongside the Syrian army in eastern Ghouta, near Damascus (Al-Hilu 2019, p. 3). Prioritizing the battlefield in rural Damascus and having received a negative response to its demands from PYD to leave control to the Syrian government, Russia is believed to give a green light to Turkish operation code-named "Olive Branch" (Haid 2018). The Russian approval facilitated Turkey's military advances in Afrin and eventually led to Turkey becoming the new ruler of the district since March 2018.

In 2019, some media channels reported that Turkey was building a wall in Afrin in an effort to isolate the Kurds in Afrin from those living in Tell Rifat (Iddon 2019). This was rejected by Turkey which emphasized its endeavour to provide security in the city against PYD/YPG attacks (Al-Khateb 2019). According to Hediye Levent, the construction of the wall between Afrin and Tell Rifat is not

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<sup>4</sup>Turkey considers PYD and its military wing YPG as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and hence labels them as terrorists.

very useful, as there are a lot of underground routes<sup>5</sup>. Ferhat Gurini adds that the wall is mostly a security measure rather than a clear Turkish ambition to isolate Afrin, reminding the permissive attitude of Turkey in allowing the move of a lot of industries from Aleppo to Afrin, especially the lucrative olive oil business<sup>6</sup>.

In both Afrin and the Euphrates Shield (ES) operation zone, Turkey has established a governance model which resembles the city/town/village administration structure within its own municipalities (Al-Hilu 2021, p. 11). Accordingly, ten local councils in the ES region and seven in Afrin govern the large cities and towns, while the neighbouring small towns and villages are administered by subordinate councils. The members of the councils originate from different ethnic and religious groups. Yet, Turkey's security and intelligence establishment keep a close eye on the selection of these members. One Turkish government representative is appointed to each council in an effort to provide collaboration with different Turkish ministries. The administrative responsibility to supervise the governance in the ES region was given to the Turkish cities of Gaziantep and Kilis, while the city of Hatay oversees the functioning of the councils in Afrin (Al-Hilu 2021, p. 11).

Meanwhile, Turkey has heavily invested in infrastructure. It has built, renovated, and opened schools, hospitals, courthouses, post-offices, and other buildings for public use. As a currency, Turkish lira has been in use since June 2020 (Al-Hilu 2021, p. 15). The councils receive their budget from the Turkish governorate that is in charge of overseeing them. The main sources of income are coming from agriculture, border-crossings, and trade, mostly exports from Turkey and a small-scale but "conspicuous trade with regime-held areas in Aleppo and the SDF areas in Manbij" (Al-Hilu 2019, p. 15).

For Turkey, the governance model established in the regions of ES and Afrin are success stories. With effective central planning and "on-site execution" involving all relevant state institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and key local actors, Turkish authorities believe that they have put in place a well-functioning administrative system that provides services in the sectors of "justice, education, health, and development" (Aslan 2019, p. 61). Moreover, in Turkish-controlled regions, the prices of some essential food items such as bread, tomatoes, potatoes, onion, and cucumber are cheaper than those in government or SDF/YPG controlled areas — a source of pride for Turkish authorities (Suriye Gundemi 2021).

A February 2021 New York Times (NYT) article indicated some hints indicating that Turkish official claims of bringing peace, welfare and stability to north-western Syria are not completely baseless (Gall 2021). Despite displacing hundreds of thousands of Kurds from Afrin and attracting criticism from the international community for launching offensives on foreign territory, Gall points to the reality of Turkey's role in providing safety to "some five million displaced and vulnerable civilians" in northern Syria (2021). For some, the arguments of Gall in her NYT article are highly controversial, due to her portrayal of a one-sided view of the complex situation in Afrin — neglecting the peaceful situation in

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<sup>5</sup>Interview with Hediye Levent, a freelance journalist (Damascus).

<sup>6</sup>Interview with Ferhat Gurini, a freelance journalist based in London.

the city before Turkey's intervention, human rights of violations committed by Turkish-backed armed groups and the lack of "women" and "Kurdish" representation in governance (Frantzman 2021, SYRIAHR 2021).

On the one hand, it is true that Turkey has not totally acted for humanitarian reasons in Afrin or elsewhere in northern Syria. It has also pursued vital national interests such as preventing additional refugee flow and destroying PYD's ambitions of autonomous rule. On the other hand, the Syrians in the Turkish-controlled regions only have Turkey as the source of protection, considering the fact that the majority of them do not have any chance to return to their hometowns in the near term. In particular, for those who have fought alongside the Free Syrian Army or other opposition-armed groups — together with their families, Turkish-controlled areas remain the only viable option to carry on their lives. They are not welcome by the government in Damascus and for Turkey, it is better to keep and manage these armed people within Syrian territory rather than inside Turkey.

In the regions of ES and Afrin, Turkey wants to create life conditions that are better than the ones in the areas administered by the Syrian government or SDF. As a matter of fact, all the key actors on the ground in Syria seek to ameliorate the safety, security, and prosperity of the areas under their governance, while trying to damage the reputation of their enemy in their own zones. For Turkey, the incessant car bomb-attacks and explosions conducted by YPG/PKK linked groups in the cities of Azaz, Al-Bab or Afrin are aimed to deteriorate the positive image of Turkey in bringing stability to the regions of ES and Afrin (Acun 2021). Likewise, the Turkish authorities believe that the Russian missile attacks, which have sporadically targeted oil tankers and primitive oil loading facilities in the vicinities of Jarablus and Al-Bab — twice happened in March 2021 — seek to damage the daily economic life in these regions (Cookman and Hezaber 2021, Ozkizilcik 2021).

Despite these explosions and attacks, Turkey appears determined to maintain and improve the governance model it has established in the regions of ES and Afrin. If he could, the President of Turkish republic, Recep Tayyip Erdogan would want to replicate a similar model in the province of Idlib. Nevertheless, here, the situation is more complex, and Turkey needs to avert any additional pro-Syrian government offensive in the vicinity of the M-4 highway. Moreover, it also has to deal with the threat coming from the Al-Qaeda linked terrorist groups and restrain the aspirations of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, HTS — "a former Al-Qaeda affiliate" (Khalifa and Bonsay 2021).

### *Idlib*

Turkey's military presence in Idlib is different from the other operation zones in three ways. First, in this province, rather than launching a unilateral military intervention with clear start and end days, Turkey gradually deployed military troops after the agreement with Russia and Iran in the Astana platform in September 2017. Accordingly, Turkey established 12 observations posts between October 2017 and May 2018 to monitor the ceasefire (Suriye Gundemi 2018). Second, the Astana process provides a certain level of legitimization to Turkey's



military presence on the Syrian soil. In addition to the tripartite of Russia, Iran and Turkey, the talks also involve representatives of international organizations and delegations from the Syrian government and the opposition (Semenov 2021). Finally, together with the other sponsors of the Astana forum, Turkey committed itself to de-escalate the situation in Idlib and to deal with the extremist groups in the province — a welcome development for the international community (Crisis Group 2018).

However, the establishment of military posts did not ease the tensions in Idlib. In September 2018, Putin and Erdogan agreed in Sochi on the creation of a 15-20 km deep demilitarised zone in the vicinities of the M-4 and M-5 highways and the elimination of all radical terrorist groups from this area (Baresh 2019, p. 24). Nevertheless, the Syrian army, which is supported by Russia and Iran, did not cease its military operations along the M-5 highway by using the pretext of fighting against terrorism. As a result, the opposition armed groups gradually lost territorial control in Idlib — going down from more than 9,000 sq km in September 2017 to 7,000 sq km in April 2019 and to nearly 3,000 sq km in March 2020 (Balanche 2020b). In this context, Putin and Erdogan concluded a new ceasefire agreement on 05 March 2020 and agreed to establish a security corridor along the M-4 highway, stretching 6 km to the north and 6 km to the south (Soldatkin and Kiselyova 2020).

In Idlib, the Turkish government appears determined to preserve the status-quo reached after the March 2020 agreement with Moscow. Turkish officials do not want to see the happening of a similar scenario of the M-5 highway in which the pro-regime forces gradually enlarged their territorial control by capturing the critical cities of Khan Shaykhun, Ma'arrat al-Nu'man and Saraqib between August 2019 and March 2020. Ankara fears that any step back from the March 2020 frontlines may trigger additional losses, not only in Idlib, but also in the other Turkish controlled districts of Afrin, Azaz, Jarablus or Al-Bab (Kardaş 2020). Therefore, Turkey deployed a troop size of 10-15,000 soldiers mostly in the north of the M-4 highway and the Jabal Al-Zawiya region in the southern countryside of the Idlib province.

As of March 2021, Turkish mass military presence has played a certain level of role in halting the violence and deterring the Syrian Army from launching a new offensive. Nevertheless, there are also other key factors that restrict the Syrian government's room of manoeuvre in Idlib, such as the deteriorating economic conditions in the country, which is hit by the Western sanctions; a re-emergent Daesh threat in the central and eastern parts of Syria; and more importantly, the position of Russia which does not appear to have an appetite in damaging its bilateral relations with Turkey (Waters 2020).

Syria is just one of the battlegrounds where Ankara and Moscow support different conflicting sides and confront each other indirectly — like in Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh. Yet, both capitals continue their “uneasy cooperation” and avoid direct political or military confrontation to resolve differences (Borshchevskaya 2020). From time to time, Russia uses the fragile situation in Idlib as a leverage against Turkey. Most recently, on 21 March 2021, Russian warplanes and ballistic missiles targeted a fuel facility and a truck park near the

“densely populated refugee camps” in the towns of Qah and Sarmada at the Turkish border (Al-Khalidi 2021). With such attacks, Russia reminds Ankara that it has the upper hand in the bilateral relations and that it can always trigger additional refugee flows from north-western Syria to Turkey, by worsening the economic and security conditions in the Turkish controlled areas.

Previous cycles of escalation and de-escalation in Idlib have resulted in the enlargement of territories which fall under the control of Damascus. The March 2021 attacks of Russia and Syrian Army’s continued artillery fire in the southern countryside of Idlib could also be a harbinger of additional pro-regime offensives. These can happen in the spring or summer of 2021, immediately after the presidential elections in the Syrian Arab Republic — which will most likely keep Bashar al-Assad in power for another seven years. Nevertheless, Russia needs to carefully assess the benefits and costs of a new military operation in Idlib, considering the significant Turkish military build-up and the economic and security-related challenges faced by the Syrian government. At some point, as Sam Heller mentions, Russia may enable the Syrian government “to seize the M-4 [Latakia-Aleppo] highway in Idlib and the areas south of it”, but this requires some kind of horse-trading between Ankara and Moscow — which can happen on the status of some critical SDF controlled cities such as Tell Rifat, Manbij, Ain Issa or Tell Tamr (Medina 2020).

In addition to dealing with the Russians on the fate of Idlib, Turkey has another key challenge in this province which is caused by the dominant position of the extremist groups. Among them, with nearly 10,000 fighters and through its close influence over the Salvation Government that governs the majority of Idlib, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) is the most dominant entity (UNSC 2021). Despite the fact that HTS is recognized as a terrorist group by Russia, the United States, the United Nations and Turkey, the group has increased its efforts to distance itself from Al-Qaeda in the last couple of years. This is mostly done by pursuing a more local agenda which focuses on the establishment of its own authority governed by the sharia law and by fighting the more transnational focused jihadist groups (Khalifa and Bonsey 2021, UNSC 2021). To increase its legitimacy, HTS has also eschewed targeting Turkish or Russian military observation posts in the Idlib de-escalation zone.

Meanwhile, Turkey has adopted a rather pragmatic approach against HTS. By seeing the entrenched position of HTS in Idlib and its capability to contain other extremist groups, Ankara has refrained from a direct military confrontation with HTS. For the Turkish officials, resorting to arms against this group — which have mostly recruited young local fighters in its ranks — will destabilize Idlib, weaken the strength of the opposition against the threat of pro-regime offensives, and trigger an additional refugee flow towards Turkey (Crisis Group 2020, p. 16). HTS has also benefitted from Turkey’s active military presence in Idlib, as it prevented further pro-regime advances that could harm HTS’s achieved gains in this province.

According to Dries Lesage, Ankara also believes that extremist groups in Syria have largely been fostered by Assad's repression.<sup>7</sup> This falls in line with Turkey's stance to not consider them all as equals to Al-Qaeda or Daesh against whom you can only achieve something with a military approach. Instead, Turkey has tried to steer the pragmatic rebels away from the more radical positions in order to make them more controllable. From the early days of its troop deployment to Idlib, Ankara's approach to deal with HTS was to "engage to control and divide" (Lister 2020).

Turkish attempts to sow discord among the radical factions paid off with the formation of Hurras al-Din (HAD) in February 2018 — "a coalition of jihadist groups who defected from HTS after its public distancing from Al-Qaeda in July 2016" (Moubayed 2020). According to UN figures, HAD has between 2,000 and 2,500 fighters (UNSC 2021). In 2020, this Al-Qaeda affiliate suffered significant losses as a result of HTS's crack down on the group, as well as the US airstrikes (Schmitt 2020). In Idlib, there are several other terrorist groups which have thousands of foreign terrorist fighters in their ranks such as the "Khattab Al-Shishani Brigade (Chechen fighters), Katiba al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (KTJ, Central Asian fighters) and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM)" (UNSC 2021).

In the short term, Turkey desires to ensure that none of the former or current Al-Qaeda affiliates endanger the lives of its soldiers that are stationed in the Idlib province. Moreover, Ankara is extremely concerned about the stability in this region which is home to an estimated 3-3.5 million people — majority of whom are living in the center and northern parts of Idlib in the vicinity of the Turkish border. In the medium to long-term, however, Turkey desires to see the dissolution or elimination of HTS and other radical groups in line with the mutually agreed decisions with Russia — last on 05 March 2020 in Moscow.

Ideally, Turkish authorities would wish for a situation where HTS "rebrands and merges into an evolved form of the Syrian National Army (SNA)", the coalition of armed opposition groups that are backed and supervised by the Turkish military (Lister 2020). Nevertheless, this does not appear to be an easy task. HTS aspires to consolidate its military and political control in Idlib (Erkmen 2020). Moreover, the group is reported to have plans to expand in northern Aleppo — towards the Olive Branch and Euphrates Shield areas — pointing at the security failures in these regions, including sporadic explosions and deaths (Al-Khateb 2021). In such a setting, it is likely that it will be good enough for Ankara to preserve the status quo in Idlib, in which HTS contains the other radical groups, while Turkey blocks additional pro-regime offensives via its diplomatic talks with Russia, as well as through its mass troop deployment along the M-4 highway.

Finally, on the living conditions of the people in Idlib — majority of whom have been internally displaced at least once during the conflict — Turkey has a clear strategic objective: keeping them inside Syria and not adding to the 3,6 million Syrians already living in Turkey. Ankara is not only concerned about the economic burden of hosting additional ordinary civilians but is also wary of

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<sup>7</sup>Interview with Dries Lesage, Associate Professor of Globalization and Global Governance at Ghent University, Belgium.

accommodating armed people that belong to secular, religious or extremist opposition groups. As Dries Lesage argues “the loyalty to the Syrian rebels is very important for Turkey as they cannot go back to the region they originally come from. As a result, they must be resettled somewhere else, but not in Turkey”.<sup>8</sup> Hediye Levent adds that the number of militias goes up to tens of thousands and including their families, it is a huge number that Turkey cannot absorb and control.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, Turkey needs to employ them inside Syria or in other regional battlefronts. This helps Ankara to exert authority in its controlled regions in northern Syria. Moreover, it provides Turkey the means to apply an assertive military posture, helping the country to introduce itself as a key power in shaping regional politics.

### **Turkey in the East of the Euphrates River**

Turkish military conducted its first and only large-scale military operation in the East of the Euphrates River — Operation Peace Spring (OPS) — in October 2019. About two weeks earlier before the start of OPS, Turkish President Erdogan presented a map to the UN General Assembly where he proposed to establish a safe zone of 480 km wide and 30 km deep, stretching along the M-4 highway in north-eastern Syria (Yackley 2019). According to Erdogan, initially 1 to 2 million Syrians could be resettled in this safe zone with the possibility to extend it further south — to Raqqa and Dayr Az Zawr — which could then increase the number to 3 million (Temizer et al. 2019).

The proposed safe zone included Manbij in the west and the Yarubiyah border crossing in the east. In Erdogan’s mind, the M-4 highway could delineate the new border and had to remain within the safe zone in order to prevent its use by PYD/YPG for trade and logistic purposes (Temizer et al. 2019). After President Trump’s decision to withdraw the American troops from the region, Turkish military launched its offensive —code named Operation Peace Spring (OPS) — taking a concrete step in realizing some of Erdogan’s plans for north-eastern Syria. In less than ten days, Turkish army units gained control over a stretch of land between Tell Abyad and Ras al-Ayn, which is approximately 120 km wide. The Turkish military operation had to stop after US and Russian diplomatic intervention in which Turkey was guaranteed on the removal of PYD/YPG 30 km away from the Turkish-Syrian border (Uras 2019).

Despite achieving significant gains in distancing PYD/YPG from its immediate border, Turkey has two un-met expectations in the aftermath of the Peace Spring Operation. First, Turkish Army could not expand its control towards the M-4 highway. Here, Turkey eyes for the towns of Ain Issa and Tell Tamr, as they are critically located on the southern edges of the Turkish-controlled region. Second, Turkey desires to extend the 120 km wide corridor and create a safe zone that stretches along its 911 km. border with Syria. In other words, Turkey wants to

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<sup>8</sup>Interview with Dries Lesage.

<sup>9</sup>Interview with Hediye Levent.

establish a new de-facto border with Syria, running mostly in parallel with the M-4 highway.

As of March 2021, Russian and American political interests and military presence in north-eastern Syria have blocked Turkey from achieving the aforementioned objectives. The region is also critical for the government in Damascus since it includes major oil fields and is rich in agricultural products such as grains and cotton (Gurbuz 2018). Regardless of Syrian government's position and that of Iran included, Ankara believes that without the US and Russia in the equation, Turkey could easily clear PYD/YPG from north-eastern Syria (Alptekin 2021). In the current settings, however, Turkish authorities appear to have realized the difficulty in setting up a Turkish-controlled safe zone all over northern Syria, which is eventually the broader strategic objective.

In order to accomplish the smaller goal, especially from December 2020 onwards, Turkish artillery has intensified its shelling of the towns of Ain Issa and Tell Tamr and Turkish-backed factions have attacked several villages in the surrounding areas of Ain Issa (Abdulrazek 2021). Here, Turkey desires to isolate the town of Ayn al-Arab (Kobane), by cutting its connection to Raqqa in the south and to Hasakah in the east. Russia, on the other side, is using the Turkish pressure as a stick to convince PYD to hand over more territories to the Syrian government in north-eastern Syria. All in all, in the short to medium term, it is likely that Turkey and Russia will have some kind of a shared control along the M-4 highway between Ain Issa and Tell Tamr — with Turkey securing the north while Russia acting as a guarantor over the road and in its south.

In the medium to long-term, Ankara is not expected to relinquish its broader strategic objective in north-eastern Syria. In March 2021, in an op-ed written for Bloomberg, President Erdogan pointed to Turkey's critical role in constructing accommodation facilities for the displaced people within Syrian territory. Once again, he referred to his plan which he presented at the UN General Assembly in September 2019 (Erdogan 2021). It is true that, for a while, Turkey had to put its plans to enlarge the OPS zone on the shelf. Nevertheless, if and when conditions permit, additional Turkish offensives in north-eastern Syria cannot be ruled out.

Ayn Al-Arab (Kobane), in the west of Tell Abyad, was already on the potential target list before the conduct of the OPS. Likewise, Turkey has long been interested in Manbij — west of the Euphrates River. Military-wise, extending the Peace Spring operation zone to the east will be more problematic than widening it towards Kobane or Manbij, considering the US military presence there and PYD's more established position in cities such as Hasakah, Qamishli and Derik. Moreover, on the Turkish side of the border, Ayn-Al Arab, Tell Abyad and Ras-al Ayn are neighboured by Gaziantep and Urfa. Going further east, Qamishli and Derik border with the predominantly Kurdish cities of Nusaybin and Cizre. Because of the large Kurdish presence in the proximate cities, deploying Turkmen or Arab armed groups will be more difficult in the east of Ras-Al Ayn.

Concerning PYD/YPG's position in confronting Turkey in the north-east, the biggest advantage is the role played by Russia and the US in deterring big-scale Turkish army offensives. However, a big challenge for the group is the position of the Arab militias within the SDF which have not been very eager to remain

involved in Ankara's fight with the PYD/YPG (Balanche 2020a). Turkey, in turn, hopes for additional losses for PYD/YPG, as this may create tensions in the alliance of SDF and weaken PYD's status in the cities of Manbij, Raqqa and Dayr Az Zawr (Orhan 2019, p. 8). Meanwhile according to Oytun Orhan, Ankara considers it as a vital security interest to fully eliminate PYD and without achieving this, Turkish army will not retreat from Syrian territory (2019, p. 9).

Finally, on the administration of the Peace Spring region, it is important to note Turkey's establishment of the "Syria Support and Coordination Centre (SUDKOM)" under the governorate of Sanliurfa. Together with his deputy governors, Sanliurfa governor is supervising the public administration in the areas of Tell Abyad and Ras al-Ayn, normalizing the conditions for the civilians by offering services in education, healthcare, justice and in the other aspects of social life (SUDKOM 2021). The internal security is provided by the police force which has been trained and equipped by Turkey in the towns of Tall Abyad and Ras al-Ayn (Al-Hilu 2021, p. 7). A weakened Turkish economy has introduced certain challenges in accomplishing a full-scale reconstruction of the OPS region when compared to other Turkish-controlled safe zones in the west of the Euphrates River. Nevertheless, the responsible governor, Abdullah Erin, regularly visits the towns of Tell Abyad and Ras al-Ayn and tries hard to mobilise funds from "Arab and Islamic foundations" in order to develop conditions in this region (Al-Hilu 2021, p. 14).

### **EU-Turkey Relations in Light of the Developments in Syria**

Ten years after the Syrian uprisings emerged, Turkey and the EU have some shared concerns, intersecting positions, and converging interests on the developments in Syria. These are: ending the violence and enabling the start of a political process in line with the UNSC Resolution 2254; establishment of a "transitional governing body" which represents the entire Syrian society (UNSC 2012); curbing the refugee flow from Syria; fighting extremism and countering the terrorist threat caused by Daesh, Al-Qaeda and like-minded groups; supporting the refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs); and ensuring the continuation of humanitarian assistance to the Syrians who are in need. Nevertheless, there are three topics on which the EU and Turkey have divergent views and contesting interests, and thereby hindering an effective cooperation between the two on the Syrian "dossier". These three are: the EU's concerns about Turkish military operations within the Syrian territory; contrasting views on the position of PYD/YPG; and the migration crisis which witnessed Erdogan's "weaponization of refugees" in response to what he considers a lack of solidarity from the EU (Jennequin 2020).

First, there has been some scepticism at the EU level about Turkey's real intentions in Syria following the first two large-scale operations — the Euphrates Shield in 2016 and 2017, and the Olive Branch in 2017 — but the EU institutions and countries were most vocal in the wake of the Operation Peace Spring which was conducted in October 2019. The harshest criticism came from the European

Parliament when its President, David Sassoli, called the Turkish offensive as an “act of war” (Stanicek 2019, p. 3). In a joint statement, the EU Council condemned Turkey’s unilateral action and called for Turkey to prioritize the fight against Daesh rather than opening up a new battlefield in Syria and thereby creating more instability (Del Torre 2019). The EU countries also agreed to limit the sales of arms to Turkey, yet without deciding on the implementation of an EU-wide embargo against Ankara (Emmott 2019). Nevertheless, Turkey remained adamant on the justness and timeliness of its operation, by explaining that it was “conducted in line with the country’s right to self-defence borne out of international law”, in an effort to establish a safe corridor that protects Turkey from the “YPG terrorists” (Daily Sabah 2019).

Second, Turkey considers PYD and its armed wing YPG as an offshoot of the terrorist group PKK. For Ankara, the affiliation between PYD/YPG and PKK is very clear. The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs stresses in its official website that “PYD/YPG was set up under the control of PKK terrorist organization in 2003” and both entities “share the same leadership cadres, organizational structure, strategies and tactics, military structure, propaganda tools, financial resources and training camps” (MFA Turkey 2021). For the EU, the US, and many European countries, however, PYD/YPG contributed significantly to the fight against Daesh. Despite designating PKK as a terrorist entity, neither the US nor the EU attaches the same label to PYD/YPG. This constitutes a continuous source of friction between Turkey and the West, which is unlikely to change under Erdogan’s leadership, considering the alliance he has developed domestically with the nationalist and religious political parties in the last couple of years.

Finally, the refugee crisis, with its peak in 2015, added a new dimension to the relationship between Turkey and the EU. To curb the refugee flow to Europe, the EU and Turkey agreed on a refugee deal in 2016. The EU promised to pay €6 billion to Turkey in return for the latter’s acceptance of hosting refugees and the blocking of illegal migration to European territories. In December 2020, the EU concluded the contracting of the initially promised amount of €6 billion, but considering the continued need, in July 2020, the EU released an additional €485 million to “support refugees and host communities in Turkey” (European Commission 2020).

Despite some criticism coming mainly from human rights activists, the refugee agreement achieved success in reducing the numbers of migrants flowing into European territory and the EU, at the institutional level, has remained committed to it (VanOpdorp 2020). The deal, however, experienced a real stress test at the end of February 2020, following an escalation of violence in Idlib and the death of more than 30 Turkish soldiers in an airstrike. On 28 February, Ankara declared that Turkey could not deal with the dire humanitarian situation in northern Syria alone, pointing to 900,000 people who have been displaced in Idlib in less than a year. For Turkey, in such a setting, Europe had to share the burden and stated that the actual conditions in north-western Syria compelled Ankara “to open its borders to refugees hoping to leave for Europe” (Mutter 2020). For a couple of days, international attention was given to thousands of refugees who flooded Turkey’s border with Greece, some travelling freely with buses arranged



by Turkish officials (Gridneff and Gall 2020). In a speech on 11 March, Erdogan once again threatened the EU and said “with the warming of the weather in the spring, the influx of irregular migrants heading to Europe will not be limited to Greece but spread all over the Mediterranean” (France24 2020).

For several days, the miserable views at the EU’s border with Turkey, where the migrants clashed with the Greek riot police continued. In the second half of March 2021, the EU countries and Turkey became hit by the Covid-19 pandemic, sweeping all other major issues under the carpet. In the following period, both Turkey and the EU refrained from escalating the tensions surrounding the refugee crisis. On the one hand, the 05 March 2020 Ankara-Moscow agreement reduced the level of violence in Syria. On the other hand, the Turkish-EU relations witnessed other serious challenges — such as the Eastern Mediterranean crisis, Turkey’s oil drilling activities in the Mediterranean, and the tensions between Turkey, Greece and Cyprus over the maritime boundaries — pushing the migration issue into the background.

Will Turkey once again use the refugees as a weapon in its relations with the EU? Will Erdogan re-open Turkey’s border with the EU when new clashes erupt in northern Syria? There are no easy and definite answers for these questions. Most likely, Turkey’s attitude will be affected by several other factors than the developments in Syria. Nevertheless, based on some hints Erdogan has given in a recent op-ed — written for Bloomberg in March 2021 — it couldn’t be wrong to assume that Turkey will adopt a similar approach when faced with additional challenges in its Syria policy.

In the tenth year of the Syrian uprising and a year after Turkey agreed a ceasefire with Russia in Idlib, in his Bloomberg article, Erdogan stated that the international community in general and the West in particular, forgot about the humanitarian crisis in Syria as a result of the global pandemic. Erdogan praised over Turkey’s success in stopping the human suffering in Syria by creating the safe zones and by investing in them. According to the Turkish leader, the Turkish-controlled areas in northern Syria “have become islands of peace and stability, as well as self-sustaining ecosystems” (Erdogan 2021). In Turkish President’s mind, Ankara’s policy decisions and actions in northern Syria have prevented irregular migration and countered terrorism, thereby contributing positively to the political stability in Europe.

Thereafter, Erdogan proposed three different courses of actions for the West to follow on the Syrian crisis. The first alternative is pretty much sticking to the current policies by staying on the sidelines while the human suffering continues in Syria. The second option is a 180-degree shift and includes a full engagement by using military, economic and diplomatic tools. As Erdogan stresses, this is not likely to happen given the EU’s stance on the Syrian uprising in the last decade. Finally, what Erdogan designates as the best course of action is for the West “to throw their weight behind Turkey and become part of the solution in Syria, at minimum cost and with maximum impact” (Erdogan 2021).

Here, Erdogan lists three demands from the West and the EU: first, the West needs to understand Turkey’s concerns about PYD/YPG and take a clear position against this terrorist entity; second, the Western countries need to fulfil their

responsibilities to address the humanitarian crisis in Syria; and third, the West should endorse Turkey's creation of safe zones in Syria and invest in these zones to improve the living conditions of the IDPs (Erdogan 2021). For the Turkish President, the failure to support Turkey and share the burden in alleviating the humanitarian crisis in Syria, could trigger new waves of migration towards European countries.

Erdogan's messages are rather clear. In the next crisis, he will most likely remind the EU leaders about his Bloomberg article. Quite possibly, he will adopt a "I have told you" attitude, unless he sees the level of support he wishes for. For Erdogan, meeting Turkey's demands will not be difficult for the West ("minimum cost") and in return, Turkey will confront the pro-regime camp, continue its support for the Syrian opposition, preserve the frozen conflict situation, stop irregular migration, and deal with the religious terrorist threat in Idlib — all beneficial for the security of the EU ("maximum impact").

The EU institutions have not officially reacted to Erdogan's Bloomberg article. It is likely that the EU is not considering substantial changes in its Syrian policy. As the EU High Representative Josep Borrell stated on the 10th anniversary of the Syrian conflict on 15 March 2021, the EU "has not changed its policy as outlined in previous Council Conclusions", remains committed to "the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian state" and desires to see the occurrence of a political transition which will establish an inclusive governance for all Syrians, in line with the UN Security Council Resolution 2254 (Borrell 2021).

In the short-term, the EU will likely continue cooperating with Turkey in the provision of support to the refugees inside Turkey. An extensive EU engagement with Ankara on the Syrian "dossier" and "throwing the weight behind Turkey" as Erdogan requests, is not likely to happen given the complex dynamics on the Syrian battlefield with Damascus, PYD/YPG, Russia, Iran, and the US having divergent security interests. In such a setting, the EU will most likely stick to its current position, which Erdogan identifies as watching from the sidelines.

## **Conclusion and the Implications for the EU**

From the early days of the Syrian uprising and the conflict, Turkey adopted a very active foreign and security policy in Syria. Ankara wanted to be the key actor in the establishment of a new political order in Syria. However, the extensive Russian military support after September 2015 resulted in significant gains for the government in Damascus and in the ensuing period, Turkish officials became less vocal about the removal of Bashar al-Assad from power. Especially in the aftermath of the first military operation in August 2016, Turkey's primary security concern has been to block any PYD/YPG effort to form a continuous territorial control along the Turkish border with Syria.

As of April 2021, Turkey has three key strategic objectives in Syria. First, to create a region in northern Syria which is ruled by friendly forces and not by any Kurdish group which is affiliated with the ideology of the PYD/YPG/PKK; second, to establish a certain level of control along the M-4 highway, stretching

roughly from Idlib in the west to the Iraqi border in the east; and third, preserving the established status quo in the west of the Euphrates while changing it in the east of the river — Ankara desires to weaken PYD/YPG in north-eastern Syria by limiting its access to the M-4 highway and by cutting its connections between the regions of Ayn al-Arab, Hasakah and Raqqa.

Even if a governmental change happens in Turkey in the upcoming years, the country will likely stay in Syria by either the presence of the Turkish army or by local armed groups which are an expansion of Turkey. Turkish armed forces will unlikely retreat from the Syrian soil without securing security and political guarantees for the Syrian IDPs and without ensuring the elimination of the terrorist threat which is primarily attributed to PYD/YPG's links with PKK. In brief, the European leaders need to understand that Turkey is there to stay in Syria. Moreover, to end PYD/YPG's territorial control in northern Syria, Turkish army may launch additional operations when conditions permit. To eliminate PYD/YPG, Ankara will seek to break away the Arab components of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), increase talks with the Kurdish rivals of PYD in Syria and Iraq, and continue to isolate the group from the international peace negotiations in Geneva (Yesiltas 2019).

Therefore, the EU should consider taking the following practical steps, when engaging with Ankara on the developments in Syria. **First**, the EU and Turkey have to continue addressing common interests. This necessitates the continuation of the EU's financial support given to Turkey to host refugees. Especially with a potential reduction in the spread of the Covid-19, the movement of migrants might increase again. Brussels and Ankara should work together to ameliorate the living conditions of millions of displaced people who are living in the camps/tents in Idlib and elsewhere in northern Syria. In providing help to the Syrian refugees and IDPs, the EU should make sure that the process is transparent, not allowing Turkey to favour certain NGOs or other aid organizations.

**Second**, and linked to first one, the EU has to ensure the continuation of a frozen conflict situation in Idlib. This requires an increased engagement on the EU side with the Astana trio of Russia, Iran, and Turkey. The EU may have certain doubts and concerns about Turkey's military presence in northern Syria — in Afrin and on the east of the Euphrates river in particular — but in Idlib, Turkey's military actions serve two beneficial purposes for both Ankara and Brussels: containing the terrorist threat and blocking any additional pro-regime advances, which could trigger additional refugee flows.

**Third**, the EU and Turkey should increase diplomatic engagement in the provision of humanitarian aid. In recent years, Russia and China have tried to centralize the humanitarian aid provision in Damascus, by limiting the number of open crossings that could be used for UN humanitarian assistance provision. Currently, only one border crossing, Bab al-Hawa in north-western Syria, is authorized since Russia and China had previously vetoed the use of other crossings in the Syrian border with Iraq, Turkey, and Jordan (Lister and Feltman 2021). Another vote is scheduled at the UN Security Council in July 2021 and Russia may push for the closure of the existing access point in Bab-al Hawa. Considering the dire living conditions in northern Syria, the EU and Turkey can

mobilize diplomatic support to prevent such a scenario and if possible, they could also insist on the opening of Bab al-Salam, which would improve the life standards of the Syrians living in northern Aleppo.

**Fourth,** in resolving the Syrian conflict and establishing a durable peace in the war-torn country, the EU should back any effort that aims at ending the hostilities and establishing ceasefires. Brussels can “increase its visibility in the UN-led Geneva process”, while engaging more with the Astana tripartite of Russia, Iran, and Turkey (Kizilkaya et al. 2021). The almost frozen conflict situation in Syria is making the socio-economic problems much more visible and the Astana forum does not appear to have the resources nor the knowledge to deal with these. The EU institutions could play a role by bringing forth the expertise of their officials on the socio-economic issues and engage with Turkey and others to improve the life standards of Syrians who are living in territories controlled by different actors (Kizilkaya et al. 2021).

**Finally,** the EU needs to understand and show empathy towards Turkish concerns on border security and terrorism. In Turkey, there is a strong antipathy towards PKK and any group that is somehow linked to it. The EU should not eschew from condemning any reported human rights violations against any ethnic group in Afrin, Ras al-Ayn or elsewhere in Syria, but it has to recognize that Turkey does not have an agenda to ethnically cleanse the Kurds, especially the practicing Muslim Kurds who do not support PKK or PYD/YPG.

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## Turkey at the Dawn of the 2020s: Old Challenges and New Prospects

By Gregory T. Papanikos \*

*Turkey is a great power as this is measured by its population and economy. The question is whether she is so great that she can play a decisive and, in many cases, antagonistic if not adversary role vis-a-vis her allies of the so-called western world. Apart from the rhetoric of the current Turkish leadership, her role is restricted by her commitment to international organization such as NATO when it comes to politico-military independence and European Union when it comes to politico-economic independence. It seems that Turkey has no other political and economic choice but to align her international ambitions with the priorities of its traditional allies of the western world even if this would require some sort of compromise. This would result from either her “free choice,” or would be forced upon her by the use of soft and hard policies. The latter might include the threat of military action.*

**Keywords:** Turkey, Middle East, great power competition, population, per capita income

### Introduction

The 2020s marks the bicentennial of the beginning of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the centennial of the establishment of the modern secular Turkish republic. It appears that modern Turkey wants to return to what she was two hundred years ago by changing the status quo which was established one hundred years ago by creating a new version of an Ottoman empire. This is well received inside Turkey, but creates many enemies at its borders and beyond. I think Kagan’s (2021) testimony applies to modern Turkey as well: the dramas of the twentieth century resulted, “...from great powers whose aspirations exceeded their capacity.”

Modern Turkey’s ambitions exceed its ability to achieve them. The reason is not that Turkey is not a great power.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, Turkey is a great power (in

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<sup>1</sup>I do not define a great power in political (security) terms, i.e., a great power is the one which can provide for its own security and a secondary power is the one that relies on great powers for its own security. Here, a great power is the one which has a large population and a high level of output production; high relative to the rest of the world. One way to measure is to use the top 10% of the countries in terms of production and population. Using these criteria, Turkey is a great power. On the other hand, I do not adopt the distinction made in security analysis and strategy between great and secondary countries because it is demeaning. All countries –small and large– have the potential to become the protagonists in world affairs if they make “smart” international strategic alliances (an issue not discussed in this paper). Israel is a good example of a small country in terms of area, population and economy but has succeeded much more than what her “power” would have predicted given the “power” of her enemies which include Turkey among many others.

terms of total economy and overall population), but the world has many great powers –old and new– which will directly challenge Turkey’s desire to “make Turkey great (an Ottoman empire) again.” On the other hand, a number of Turkey’s bordering countries have entered into strategic alliances with other countries which directly or indirectly challenge Turkey’s craving to become a great power again. This is the regional version of the so-called Great Power Competition (GPC).<sup>2</sup>

From an economic and demographic point of view, Turkey has the potential to become a great regional power again. After all, Turkey belongs to the group of G19 countries (G20 if the European Union is included) because of its strong economy and its large population. Of course, the two can be combined into only one variable, i.e., per capita output, but it does not capture the population size which is very important for non-economic reasons such as military power even though exceptions do exist, e.g., Israel.<sup>3</sup>

The issue of how great Turkey is, as well as how great it may become, is examined in this paper. The purpose is twofold. Firstly, using demographic and economic statistics, this paper shows that Turkey has grown into a great power during the first two decades of the twenty-first century. Secondly, these great economic and demographic achievements were confused by the Turkish authorities as the means to achieve domestic, regional and global political ends. Even though a strong economy and a large population are necessary to become a great power (again), they are, nevertheless, not sufficient. The latter requires a clear vision of what is possible to achieve given the regional and international political dynamics.<sup>4</sup> It seems that the current political leadership in Turkey lacks such a clear vision which results in serious strategic failures in the international political arena, undermining not only its political objectives, but its economic achievements as well. At the moment, Turkey seems to be at a crossroads. Hard choices must be made. Two hard options seem to be available. Firstly, by the end of the 2020s, Turkey could become a stable regime, albeit not the great power of the past. Secondly, Turkey, once again, may become “the sick man of Europe”; returning to a status of an Ottoman empire at its peak is not an option in the foreseeable future.

This paper is organized in six sections, including this introduction. The next section examines three dilemmas which the current Turkish political leadership is facing. In the following two sections, I present the recent developments of Turkey’s demographic characteristics and economic achievements respectively. In last section before the conclusion, I briefly discuss the current political, diplomatic and military challenges on which Turkey should make some hard decisions.

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<sup>2</sup>This is not unique to Turkey. The United Kingdom wants to become a great power again, but the prospects are dismal as Shapiro and Witney (2021) have recently explained.

<sup>3</sup>Papanikos (2015) has examined the size of military spending as a share of GDP in the Mediterranean basin. Turkey spends a high share of its GDP (over 3%) but Israel spends close to 10%. Many other countries spend more than 3% of their GDP on military.

<sup>4</sup>Two other countries in the region –Russia and Egypt– have a larger population than Turkey. India is another country with a huge population which may act as a constraint to Turkey’s ambition to become a great power again. The reason is Turkey’s support for Pakistan. Also, the population issue is always used by Turkey as being a determining factor in intervening with other countries political affairs even for countries like Germany and France with huge Turkish diaspora.

## Turkish Dilemmas

Turkey's future depends on her own decisions. However, Turkey should take into consideration the constraints imposed by an ever-changing international order.<sup>5</sup> This requires a clear strategy as to deciding which way forward. The two choices are crystal clear by now; Turkey can choose an independent course of action by disentangling itself from all the fetters of international accords, or, alternatively, strengthen its relationships with its historical political (NATO) and economic (European Union) allies. Currently, Turkey follows an ambivalent strategy that aims at serving both objectives, but this is not sustainable, particularly in the current world order.<sup>6</sup>

The last hundred years have been characterized by Turkey's strong commitment to the interest of the western world. Table 1 provides the most important international commitment Turkey made since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923.

**Table 1.** *Turkey's International Commitments*

Year/Period	Commitment
1920s	The signing of the Treaty of Lausanne.
1952	Joining NATO.
1963	Signing an association agreement with the European Economic Community (now European Union).
1995	Establishment of a Customs Union with the European Union.
2004	Negotiations for full accession to the European Union has started but so far they have stalled.

### *The Treaty of Lausanne*

The Treaty of Lausanne was the most important of the three strategic decisions; it determined the current borders of Turkey. This treaty was also signed by a number of countries: France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Japan, Greece, Romania, and Yugoslavia. This stamped the official dismantling of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. If Turkey's current political strategy is the revival of the Ottoman Empire, then the Treaty of Lausanne must be changed either through negotiations, or, unilaterally, by an act of war. Of course,

<sup>5</sup>The most important recent international change is the new USA President who has made clear from the beginning that he would promote the idea of democracy on a global scale. The previous USA administration paid lip service to such issues and therefore violated democratic values in countries such as China, Russia and Turkey, all playing a secondary role. The new administration appears to think otherwise, which might become a serious threat to Turkey's ambition to become great again. I do not agree with statements that the USA has abandoned the Middle East such as, "The Biden Administration will face another important and evolving reality: The Middle East, which for the past century at least was shaped by global powers, is now in the midst of an internal transformation that makes it more resistant to attempts by those outside the region to determine political outcomes. This reality is most evident today with regional powers, caught in the throes of a Middle East in turmoil, having grown more confident and increasingly assertive in pressing their own policy preferences, even when these clash with US interests" Middle East Institute (2021, p. 6).

<sup>6</sup>Historically, Turkey was always the victim of international conditions. Her choices of the past were disastrous which cost many sacrifices including loss of land and people.

Turkey can pursue the same strategy by implementing a policy of indirect interventions in the countries of the former Ottoman Empire. It appears that this subtle revival of the Ottoman Empire which appeared as a policy of having “zero problems” with its neighbours has so far failed because it resulted Turkey having “zero friends” at its borders. This strategy is impossible to be successful. Turkey is a great power but not so great as to be able to compete successfully with the other great powers in the area such as Russia, some member countries of the European Union, mainly France, and, above all, the USA. On the other hand, Turkey’s European neighbours have no interest in Turkey as long as she remains a non-EU member. Similarly, the non-European countries have entered into other strategic alliances, excluding Turkey, such as the agreement of Cyprus, Egypt, Greece and Israel. Turkey has become a follower and a reactionary force and other countries seem to determine the regional agenda. Summing up, the renegotiation of the Treaty of Lausanne does not seem to be a realistic option.

### *NATO*

Turkey seems to follow an independent military (strategic) policy which in some cases clashes with her commitment to NATO. Turkey cannot be a member of NATO and have an independent strategic policy including the use of its military force which clashes with other members of NATO. The case of France in Libya and the USA with the S400 Russian missiles are characteristic examples. Turkey must make a strategic choice; either within NATO or outside NATO. Turkey has a strong military but it cannot cope with countries such as France and the USA particularly when these countries have many allies in the region and Turkey has only enemies.

### *The European Union*

This seems to be the most important commitment Turkey is facing today. The European Union issue determines the other two. As things stand now, there is not a single country in the European Union which wants seriously to discuss the Treaty of Lausanne. The European Union makes it clear to Turkey that the only solution to differences between neighbour and especially allied countries, is direct negotiations, and if these fail, a recourse to International Court of Justice. In a recent document of the European Commission (2021, p. 2) this is clearly stated:

The delimitation of the continental shelf and Exclusive Economic Zones should be addressed through dialogue and negotiations in good faith, in accordance with international law, including the UNCLOS, having recourse, if necessary, to the International Court of Justice. In the above context, unequivocal commitment to good neighbourly relations and to the peaceful settlement of disputes remains essential.

Apart from the good neighbour policy, Turkey’s full membership to the EU depends on its internal policy as well. Before joining the EU, Turkey will be forced to democratize its society and polity as well as align its international economic and political relations to those of the EU. Turkey would have no other choice but democratize its society and follow a collaborative strategy with the EU.

Full accession to the EU does not seem to be a strategy that can be realized in the near future, and definitely not during the current decade. On the contrary, I think that Turkey will move away from the EU by abandoning the required conditions for full membership. There are two reasons for this. First, many EU countries do not want Turkey to become a full member for various reasons, one of which is its large population –discussed in the next section– which will give Turkey a very high representation in the institutions of the EU such as the European Parliament. There are other reasons which relate to the lack of cultural and religious affinity of Turkey with the EU. Small and large countries of the EU would, however, pretend that they would welcome Turkey as full member if she meets the conditions. On the other hand, Turkey does not want to become member of the EU, although she pretends.

This hypocritical stance of the EU and Turkey can be demonstrated using the conflict over Cyprus.<sup>7</sup> Turkey's diplomatic tackling of the Cypriot issue has been problematic. The EU member states which do not want Turkey to enter as a full member will use the Cypriot stalemate as an excuse to reject Turkey's application for full membership. What is the real issue? Turkey argues that a couple thousand Turks in Cyprus cannot leave peacefully together with 600 thousand Greek Cypriots. The history is well-known, but Turkey is politically at a disadvantage when its future within the EU is at stake. If the difference between the Turkish-Cypriots and the Greek-Cypriots is one of ethnicity and religion, then some EU countries may make the same arguments and say that Turkey cannot be part of the European family because of their different religion and ethnicity, pretty much as the Turkish-Cypriots cannot leave together with the Greek-Cypriots for exactly the same reasons.

### *An Isolated Turkey*

It is quite possible that 2021 will be a critical year for Turkey during which a number of decisions to be taken will determine its economic and political future. If one reads the reports of many international organizations as well as of the international mass media and takes them at face value, then it appears that Turkey must make some harsh decisions in order to get out of its current regional and world isolation. According to the Director of the Washington-based Middle East Institute, Turkey's President has realized that he is, "very isolated in the region and that his whole anti-western, anti-US rhetoric is not working for him." Is this the case? Yes and no. The critical variable is the performance of the Turkish economy, and it looks that the Turkish economy has reached a different trajectory of economic growth in the last two decades. If the economic miracle of the Turkish economy continues for the next decades, then the government of Turkey (actually the president of Turkey) will have sufficient political power in his hand to pursue his own domestic and international political agenda. So far, despite his economic success since 2002, he has failed in all his strategic international political, military and diplomatic goals, thus forcing him to implement authoritarian domestic policies

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<sup>7</sup>See Foka (2015) for a discussion of the division of Cyprus after the invasion of Turkey in 1974. On the energy issue see Papanikos (2017).

to control the judiciary and the freedom of expression. These are examined later in this paper.

### **A Strong Population**

Population plays an important role in Turkish politics and economics.<sup>8</sup> Since the establishment of the modern Turkish Republic in 1923, population matters have been a thorny issue. After all, the beginning of the Turkish Republic was marked by huge Greek and Turkish population exchanges. Still, the population topic haunts modern politics because of the Muslim minority in Greece (Thrace) and the Greek Orthodox minority in Turkey have been one of the many sources of political bickering. This issue is further discussed by Dayıoğlu and Aslım (2015) from the perspective of reciprocity and minority rights. This theme is not examined here. The emphasis of this section is on the population comparisons between selected EU countries and Turkey because I consider it as the most important and critical in determining the future of an EU-Turkey relationship.

Tables 2 and 3 show Turkey's population and the populations of selected EU countries, i.e., those which have a population higher than ten million. Turkey is a very large country. Its high population growth rate has created a large youth cohort. In the beginning of the 2020s, Turkey's population became the largest population of Europe if Russia is excluded. In 2020, Turkey surpassed Germany. In the beginning of the 2010s, Turkey's population was 74 million people. In just one decade, Turkey's population increased by ten million people to 84 million, which amounts to the entire population of Greece, i.e., Turkey added one Greece to its population in one decade. On the other hand, Greece's population has decreased by half a million during the same period.

Table 3 compares the Turkish with the total population of the EU. In the beginning of this century, Turkey's population was 64 million which accounted for 15% of the total population of the EU. In just two decades this proportion increased to 19% and given the growth rate dynamics (columns 6-8 of Table 3), this proportion is expected to increase.

What are the economic and political implications of the above analysis? First, Turkey should find employment for its increasing youth population as well as providing the necessary education at all levels of education. In the last few decades many new universities have been established, mainly private universities to accommodate the higher demand from tertiary education by Turkey's youth population. Turkey needs to find jobs for these youth; educated or non-educated.<sup>9</sup> This can be done either domestically by policies which promote economic growth at a higher rate than in the past, or internationally by allowing its youth to find jobs outside Turkey mainly in some advanced EU countries.

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<sup>8</sup>Economic growth depends on human capital. The latter includes population. Bakan and Gökmen (2016), using a cointegration analysis of economic growth in Turkey and education spending, found a positive relation.

<sup>9</sup>This is not unique to Turkey. Egypt faces similar problems as these are analyzed in El Khouli (2015). Roberts (2016) has related the Arab Spring to the youth demographics of the countries in the area.



Second, this higher Turkish population relative to an aged Europe becomes an important impediment to any Turkish aspiration to become a full member of the European Union. The political and economic implications for the EU will be tremendous and some countries of the EU think will be catastrophic. This is a thorny issue and I strongly believe it is the most important reason why Turkey would experience great resistance from many EU countries. The difficulty is that this true barrier to enter into the EU is not part of any official negotiation process, but this is exactly what is in the back of the mind of many EU countries which play a decisive role. Since this issue is politically incorrect to be raised, other problems will appear as being important. Turkey should take this into consideration when shaping its negotiations with the EU.

**Table 2.** *The Population of Turkey and Selected EU Countries, 2011-2020 (000s)*

Country	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Turkey	83,703	82,579	81,407	80,313	79,278	78,218	77,182	76,148	75,176	74,224
Germany	83,165	83,093	82,906	82,657	82,349	81,687	80,983	80,646	80,426	80,275
France	67,634	67,456	67,265	67,063	66,831	66,581	66,312	65,991	65,651	65,330
Italy	60,315	60,339	60,459	60,537	60,628	60,731	60,789	60,646	60,339	60,060
Spain	47,151	47,104	46,729	46,533	46,450	46,410	46,455	46,593	46,766	46,736
Poland	38,358	38,390	38,413	38,422	38,427	38,455	38,484	38,502	38,534	38,526
Romania	19,241	19,370	19,477	19,593	19,706	19,822	19,916	19,989	20,060	20,148
Netherlands	17,433	17,345	17,232	17,131	17,030	16,940	16,865	16,804	16,755	16,693
Belgium	11,537	11,486	11,427	11,375	11,331	11,274	11,209	11,159	11,107	11,038
Czechia	10,707	10,669	10,626	10,590	10,565	10,543	10,525	10,511	10,509	10,497
Greece	10,665	10,725	10,733	10,755	10,776	10,821	10,892	10,965	11,045	11,105
Sweden	10,320	10,279	10,175	10,058	9,923	9,799	9,696	9,600	9,519	9,449
Portugal	10,287	10,286	10,284	10,300	10,326	10,358	10,401	10,457	10,515	10,558

Source: European Commission (2020).

**Table 3.** *Turkish and EU Population Compared*

Year	EU-POP (000s) (1)	TUR-POP (000s) (2)	TUR / EU POP (2)/(1) % (3)	EU-POP (0-14) (000s) (4)	TUR-POP (0-14) (000s) (5)	TUR/EU POP (0-14) (5)/(4)% (6)	EU-POP (0-14)/ EU-POP (4)/(1)% (7)	TUR-POP (0-14)/ TUR-POP (5)/(2)% (8)
2000	428154	64269	15.011	NA	18905	NA	16.687	29.415
2001	428915	65166	15.193	71574	18906	26.415	16.507	29.012
2002	429720	66003	15.360	70935	18906	26.653	16.310	28.644
2003	431310	66795	15.487	70346	18907	26.877	16.115	28.306
2004	432868	67599	15.617	69759	18936	27.145	15.911	28.012
2005	434497	68435	15.750	69134	18964	27.431	15.738	27.711
2006	435872	69295	15.898	68597	18981	27.670	15.596	27.392
2007	437405	70158	16.040	68218	18990	27.837	15.487	27.067
2008	438869	71052	16.190	67967	18715	27.536	15.430	26.341
2009	440238	72039	16.364	67931	18824	27.711	15.416	26.130
2010	440971	73142	16.587	67982	18869	27.756	15.385	25.798
2011	441597	74224	16.808	67938	18883	27.794	15.334	25.440
2012	442376	75176	16.994	67835	18872	27.820	15.313	25.104
2013	443023	76148	17.188	67841	18853	27.791	15.294	24.759
2014	443725	77182	17.394	67863	18856	27.786	15.257	24.431
2015	444682	78218	17.590	67843	18874	27.820	15.229	24.130

2016	445700	79278	17.787	67875	18906	27.854	15.212	23.848
2017	446392	80313	17.992	67903	18980	27.951	15.174	23.632
2018	447155	81407	18.206	67853	19109	28.162	NA	23.473
2019	448081	82579	18.429	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2020	448426	83703	18.666	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2021	448821	84845	18.904	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2022	449367	86005	19.139	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Source: European Commission (2020) and Author's Calculations.

The above overall demographic analysis disguises two important issues which relate to the “ideology” of modern Turkey. It appears that Turkey emphasizes the homogeneity of its population ever since the establishment of the Turkish republic in 1923. The exchange of Greek-Turkish population was a deliberate action by both Greek and Turkish leadership at the time to create a homogeneous ethnicity. As a matter of fact, Gingeras (2016) draws an analogy between the German Nazi and Turkey under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in interpreting history and race the same way. The Nazis failed. The current leadership in Turkey emphasizes the creation of a society that has a common history which goes back to the ancient people of Mesopotamia of Hittites with their own unique language and civilization. The history of Hittites or pro-Hittites goes back thousands of years, and if this is the case then modern Turkey can claim that they were always part of Anatolia at least since 5000 BCE. One of the first policies of the 1920s reforms was the change of language by substituting the Arab alphabet with the Latin alphabet; and finally, the issue of religion. Now, a Turkish citizen as opposed to an Ottoman citizen has the same religion. Thus, modern Turkey’s leadership wants to create an ethnos which has a long history in the area, the same unique language, and the same religion. What about geography? Modern Turkey considers that all geographical areas which historically belonged to their race going back to Hittites, and more recently to the Ottoman Empire as being part of Turkey, speak the same language and share the same religion. Things become more complicated when Turkey wants to play a sort of a leader of the Muslim world by supporting, for example, the Muslim brotherhood.

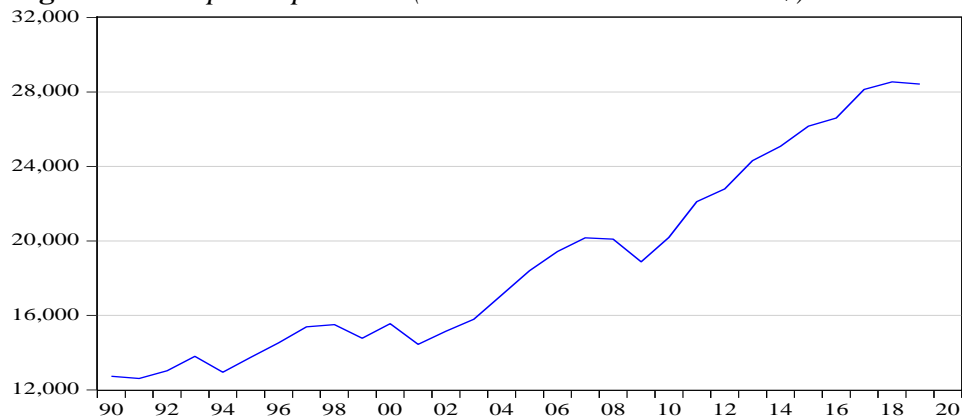
Three points here are important. First, if this is part of Turkey’s ideology, then sooner or later it will clash with populations which are larger than hers such as India’s, Russia’s and Egypt’s. Second, inside Turkey there is a distinct race which has a much higher population growth than the pure Turkish population. As mentioned in Bekdil (2021), the Kurdish-speaking population has a fertility rate of 3.41 as opposed to 2.09 in the Turkish-speaking population. If this is true, then the overall population growth is the result of an increase in the Kurdish population and not of the Turkish population. This is not a blessing but a curse for the future internal stability of Turkey. My third point might be more sensitive. Since history is used to legitimize the “Turkishness” of the Turkish population, one might argue –based on strong historical evidence– that most of Turkey’s population today is the result of forced ex-islamization of its non-Muslim population. A DNA test might show that there is little Turkishness left to the population of Turkey today. In this case, the whole ideological edifice of modern Turkey might collapse. However, this need not be the case. The greatest country of the world, the USA, has a large non-homogeneous population. The great cities of Istanbul and Izmir were great

when they had a mixture of populations in terms of history, religion and languages. Population is not the problem, but the policies towards the population of different histories, languages and religions is the problem.

### Strong but Unstable Economic Performance

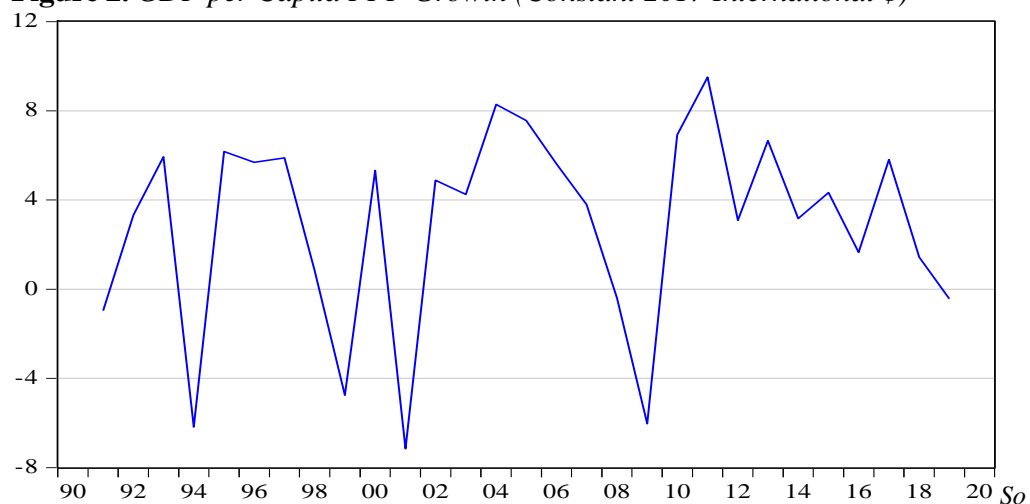
Population is only one pillar of a great power; the other is the economy. Figure 1 shows the per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Purchasing Power Parities from 1990 in constant 2017 US Dollars and Figure 2 its rate of growth. The curve shows three trajectories of growth. The first lasted till the end of the previous century. Per capita GDP increases from 12 thousand to 16 thousand US Dollars in just a decade. However, the first two years of the current century the Turkish people experience a sharp decline. This might explain why there was a change in the political regime.

**Figure 1.** GDP per Capita PPP (Constant 2017 International \$)



Source: World Bank and Author's Calculations.

**Figure 2.** GDP per Capita PPP Growth (Constant 2017 International \$)



Source: World Bank and Author's Calculations.

The second growth trajectory started right after the change in government and was characterized by a strong increase in per capita GDP from about 15 thousand in the beginning of the first decade of the current century to just over 20 thousand US Dollars at the end of the decade. The impact of the great recession which hit most of the countries between 2008-2010 was very small in Turkey. On the contrary, Turkey's economy in the second decade of the twenty-first century continued to increase at a very high rate. From 20 thousand dollars in the beginning of the second decade, it reached 28 thousand US Dollars by the end of it.

The exceptional economic performance may explain Turkish people's continuous support for the political regime. However, the two Figures show a decrease in recent years in per capita GDP, which if continued, might jeopardize the military and political international ambitions of the current political regime. It is quite possible that this reduction in economic activity will create domestic political problems, shaking the political support of the existing government. An early warning were the results of local elections in 2019 as was manifested by the double elections for the city of Istanbul.

If the bad economic situation deteriorates, then the current government can hold on to power by playing out the nationalist tune and risk international military adventures such as in Syria, Libya and Armenia-Azerbaijan which will undermine its relations with its traditional NATO allies. However, such an endeavor will receive strong political support from many Turkish people. The Turkish government may also use it to explain that the bad economic situation is due to the international economic war of "imperialists," but Turkey is independent and strong and can sacrifice economic welfare for national welfare. This rhetoric has served many governments well whose handling of the economy has been very bad. One way to deal with the economic competence is to use nationalistic rhetoric. People are willing to listen and accept it, but not for long.

Many people do not usually accept such rhetoric, and the opposition will blame the government for the bad economic situation stressing the issue of economic corruption and nepotism. In such a situation, authoritarian governments restrict civic freedoms and use the judiciary to impose their will and restrict the opposition. If this oppression is combined with the nationalist saga, as is the case of Turkey with the Kurds, then so much the better. This policy of domestic oppression is a good strategy if the regime does not expect a quick economic recovery. It seems that this is the case in Turkey in the beginning of the current –third– decade of the twenty-first century. This theme is examined in the following section.

## **A Failing Democracy**

There are many indices which can be used to show the trajectory of Turkey's performance in achieving "democracy". I examined the indices reported by the Swedish V-Dem Institute.<sup>10</sup> All indices show a deterioration of democracy in Turkey. I have selected two indices from a couple of hundred reports just to

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<sup>10</sup><https://www.v-dem.net/en/about/about-v-dem/>

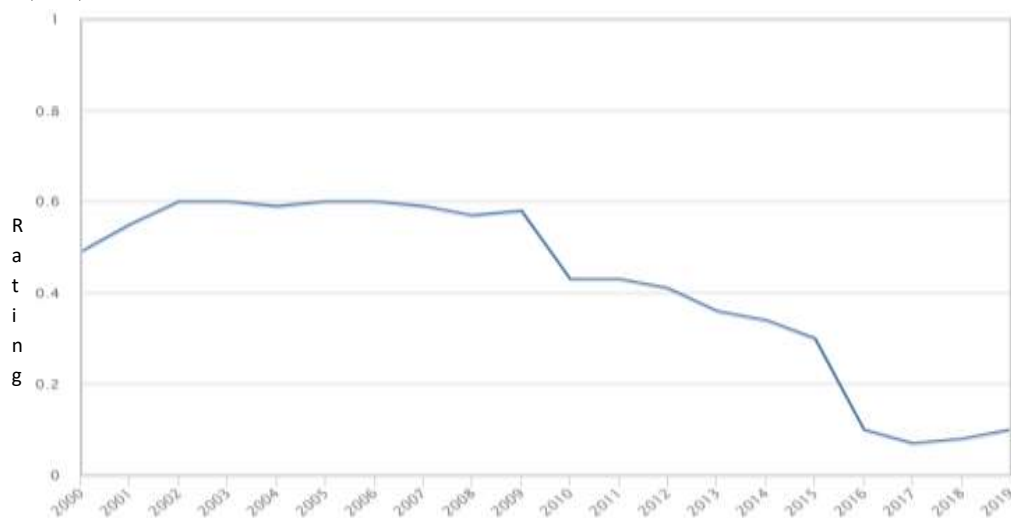
demonstrate the point of a failing democracy. These are reported here as Figures 3 and 4. Both measurements end in 2019 and therefore no conclusions can be drawn for the beginning of the third decade of twenty-first century.

Recently, university students have demonstrated against Turkey's president dismantling of the autonomy of Turkish universities. Figure 3 shows that this is process of infringement of academic freedom throughout the 2010s. Throughout the first decade of the current century, Turkey's performance on academic freedom was stable, but throughout the second decade the situation has worsened dramatically. In recent years the situation has become worse and many students demonstrated against the president's attempts to restrict academic freedom and self-governance of the universities.

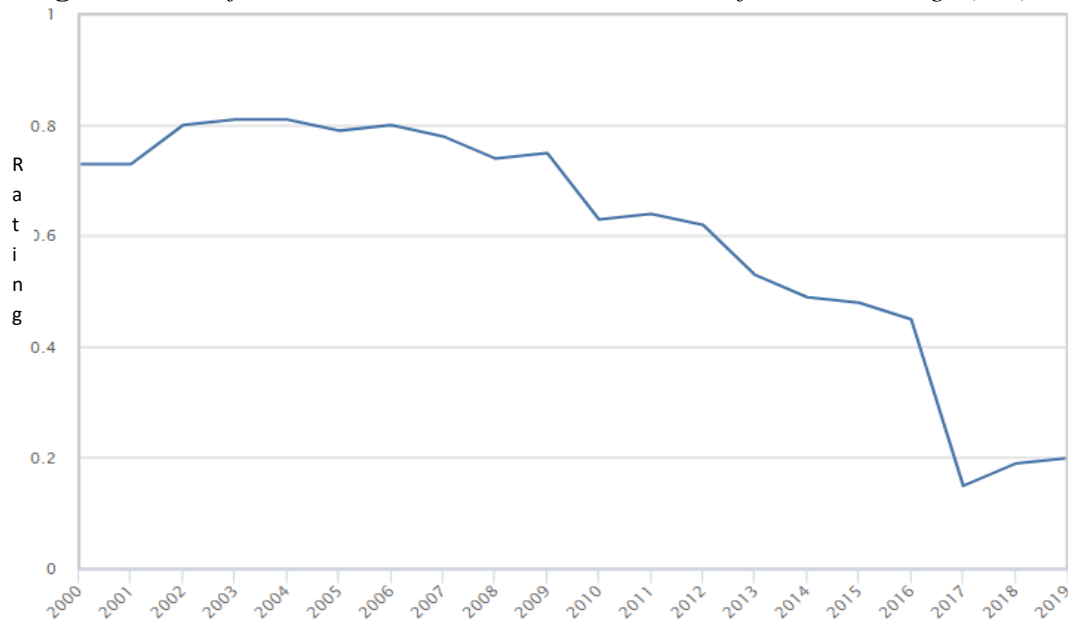
Figure 4 measures the rule of law. The pattern is similar to the academic freedom index. The rule of law has deteriorated during the second decade of the twenty-first century and the prospects are not any better for the third decade.

It seems that Turkey has decided to become more authoritarian to meet its old challenge of domestic stability, but this will undermine her prospects in the international arena. Countries such as the USA and EU will always use these indicators to support direct or indirect sanctions against Turkey. Global democracy will be high on the agenda of the current USA administration and Turkey sooner or later should meet this challenge if she wants to change her dismal prospects.

**Figure 3.** *Academic Freedom Index, 2000-2019 [Scale: Interval, from low to high (0-1)]*



*Note:* This index is based on the question, “To what extent is academic freedom respected?” According to the V-Dem Institute’s clarification “Academic freedom is understood as the right of academics, without constriction by prescribed doctrine, to freedom of teaching and discussion, freedom in carrying out research and disseminating and publishing the results thereof, freedom to express freely their opinion about the institution or system in which they work, freedom from institutional censorship and freedom to participate in professional or representative academic bodies (UNESCO 1997). The Academic Freedom Index is designed to provide an aggregated measure that captures the de facto realization of academic freedom, including the degree to which higher-education institutions are autonomous.”

**Figure 4.** Rule of Law Index, 2000-2019 [Scale: Interval, from Low to High (0-1)]

*Note:* This index is based on the question, “To what extent are laws transparently, independently, predictably, impartially, and equally enforced, and to what extent do the actions of government officials comply with the law?” According to the V-Dem Institute’s clarification “The index is formed by taking the point estimates from a Bayesian factor analysis model of the indicators for compliance with high court (v2juhccomp), compliance with judiciary (v2jucomp), high court independence (v2juhcind), lower court independence (v2juncind), executive respects constitution (v2exrescon), rigorous and impartial public administration (v2clrspct), transparent laws with predictable enforcement (v2cltrnslw), access to justice for men (v2clacjstm), access to justice for women (v2clacjstw), judicial accountability (v2juacct), judicial corruption decision (v2juccorrdc), public sector corrupt exchanges (v2excrptps), public sector theft (v2exthftps), executive bribery and corrupt exchanges (v2exbribe), executive embezzlement and theft (v2exembezt).”

## Conclusion

Turkey should deal with its old challenges, including her full membership to the European Union. However, there are many impediments to overcome, such as the internal respect of human rights and democratic processes. It seems that these are positively correlated with economic achievements. Usually, the decline of the economy is associated with more internal authoritarian measures.

Turkey wants to become a great (world or regional) power, but the prospects are dismal. Its strong population and economy are undermined by internal structural problems. One of the characteristics of great powers is that they appear to be part of the solution to international political and military problems. So far, Turkey is part of the problem which has created great animosity in her own region, and has called for the intervention of outsiders such as the USA, Russia and France. Turkey’s old challenges (e.g., the Cyprus issue) still haunt her, undermining her great prospects (e.g., full membership to the EU and zero problems with her neighbors). As things stand now, the economic and political prospects are not

good. Turkey, instead of having zero problems, has ended up with zero true friends.

## Acknowledgements

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## Poetry in Action: From the Gift Economy to Corporate Philanthropists<sup>1</sup>

By Lorenzo Gelmini\*

*The role of patronage has been widely examined in studies in different disciplines, from the arts to sociology. This paper adopts a novel interdisciplinary approach to investigate the relationship between patronage, corporate philanthropy, and the economic (and non-economic) returns for donors. In an ancient Latin literature perspective, the case study analyzes the literary works of Horace, master poet and noteworthy exemplum of cursus honorum and Latin patronage. Highlighting some pivotal poetic lines (from a managerial standpoint), the study proposes a patronage and gift economy framework as the building blocks for corporate philanthropy and corporate social responsibility actions. While patronage fosters the development of economic relationships, even if in a non-linear and multi-faceted way, corporate philanthropy promotes relationships aimed at achieving positive returns for the donor, be they economic or meta-economic, instantaneous or delayed. Although more difficult to capture through the usual cash inflow and outflow measurements, corporate philanthropy and corporate social responsibility express an elusive but valuable economic relationship. Therefore, this study offers some managerial insights for non-profit corporations and those industries – for example, sports – where the economic returns may not be a central element of the investment. Finally, it is noteworthy that Horace is, among other things, an author of great modernity for his tension, articulated and complex, towards the active events of his time. His rediscovery, not only in literary studies, has allowed to add to other disciplines the analysis of an intellectual, divided between art and current life.*

**Keywords:** Latin literature, patronage, corporate philanthropy, gift economy, non-financial performance

### Introduction

The role of patronage has been widely explored in different disciplines, from the arts to sociology. We adopt a novel interdisciplinary approach and an ancient Latin literature perspective (particularly the Golden Age of Augustus, Maecenas, and Horace) to investigate the relationship between patronage, corporate philanthropy, and the economic (and non-economic) returns for donors. This is an elusive but valuable relationship with considerable implications for entrepreneurship, from not-for-profit organizations to sports management.

The paper is structured as follows. The next section describes the main contributions in the literature, briefly illustrates Horace's life and the role of

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<sup>1</sup>The paper is the third, out of four, installment of a project regarding arts, in particular Latin Poetry, patronage and corporate philanthropy.

patronage in the arts in the Golden Age in Rome. We then develop our case study and propose a patronage and gift economy framework, offering suggestions and insights for a corporate philanthropy. The final section provides the conclusion, limitations, and future research avenues.

## Literature Review

Classicists and sociologists define patronage as an asymmetrical personal relationship of some duration that involves the reciprocal exchange of goods and services (Saller 1982). From the patron's side, the advantages of the exchange might be political or not, for instance, enhancing man's *auctoritas* and *dignitas*, offering both economic and non-economic returns. Corporate philanthropy, on the contrary, is the *assemblage* of corporate (a public entity organized around a central theme driven by an economic, legal, and social purpose) and philanthropy (that is, love of fellow man). In general, "corporate philanthropy describes the role and responsibility of the firm to recognize its societal obligation and to execute initiatives to benefit its constituents – *altruistic capitalism*" (Fioravante 2010). In this sense, patronage and corporate philanthropy share some elements: both entail a gift relationship, a "non-commercial social transfer of wealth, material objects or non-material assistance rendered in forms that are culturally meaningful and that generate moral relationship between individuals or groups such as solidarity, dependence, legitimacy, and reputability" (Kidd 1996).

At the same time, scholars point out some differences between individual patronage and different forms of foundations or corporations. "In recent decades patronage has taken an interesting turn away from the individual and personal form in which it appeared for so long and has become strangely depersonalized and institutionalized" (Gold 2012), and in so doing, "recipients are not expected to laud the virtues of the sources of their income" (Gold 2012).

Patronage in the arts has a long history. While the nature and extent of the influence of literary patronage has been debated, "patronage itself has endured for as long as literature" (Gold 2012). Dating back to ancient Greece, it was chiefly associated with autocratic rulers (although in Athens, the *choregia* was a kind of democratization of the patronage principle), but also played a significant role in ancient Rome. In this sense, in the Golden Age, "Augustus and Maecenas gathered round them the greatest intellectual figures of the period and gave them both economic support and cultural stimulus. Maecenas especially, in his role as both close ally of Augustus and amateur of new poetry, gave to Virgil, Horace, Propertius, and others personal friendship and generous financial support" (Oxford Dictionary, retrieved August 2019)<sup>2</sup>.

Worth noting is that the word *philanthropia* originally referred to the relationship of the gods with humans, encapsulating the notion of return (*philanthropon*) from the recipients in the form of honors heaped on the donor, a gift exchange (Cunningham 2016).

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<sup>2</sup>The Golden Age is commonly identified as the time of benefactions of empire in Augustan literature.

In effect, this relationship brings together the notion of sacrifice to the gods, where “sacrificium” usually implies “doing without something” or “giving something up” and, in metaphorical use, to describe doing good for others or taking a short-term loss in return for a greater gain later.

In more recent times, corporate philanthropy has gained renewed attention with the criticism of the welfare state and capitalism. According to some scholars, *philanthrocapitalism* would be “capable of solving the world’s most deep rooted problems, a happy marriage of capitalism efficiency and entrepreneurship applied to disease and poverty, to higher education and the arts” (Cunningham 2016).

Other scholars discuss the ambivalence of *philanthrocapitalism*, recalling that “what may be most new about *philanthrocapitalism* is the very explicitness of the self-interested motives underlying large-scale charitable activities... what is most notable about the new philanthropy is the explicitness of the belief that as private enrichment purportedly advances the public good, increased wealth concentration is to be commended rather than questioned” (McGoey 2012).

## Theoretical Framework

In this article, we rely on three theoretical frameworks: the interactionist perspective on giving, and as such, the gift economy (Mauss 1990); the relationship between corporate philanthropy and corporate social responsibility (Godfrey 2005); and the notion of meta-economic performance (Borré 2008, Borré and Gelmini 2008).

As Mauss (1990) pointed out in his celebrated work, giving, taking, and reciprocating form a three-part cycle of actions, and in this sense, giving is socially embedded and frequently prompts a counter gift. Godfrey (2005) suggests that, “(1) corporate philanthropy can generate positive moral capital among communities and stakeholders, (2) moral capital can provide shareholders with insurance-like protection for many of a firm’s relation-based intangible assets, and (3) this protection contributes to shareholder wealth”.

According to Borré (2008), the company’s global performance comprises all the benefits that the owner of a share in the company expects to gain from the holding of the company itself. These benefits and positive results might be: (1) strictly financial and economic, i.e., positive results and cash flows that flow to the owner, directly via the company, in a fair and foreseeable length of time; (2) broader financial and economic results, i.e., positive results and cash flows that flow to the owner: a) not directly via the company (for instance, indirect advantages to the company’s shareholders), or b) at a date later than the time when the effective pre-conditions for the results were created; (3) non-financial or non-economic results, such as social objectives (including recognition, prestige, social support, the cultural promotion of the social system the company operates in), environmental goals (for instance, reduction of environmental impact, improvement of the ecosystem), or more generally, competitiveness (ability to influence markets, strength with respect to customers, suppliers, competitors).

We define in our paper type (1) as economic performance, types (2) and (3) as meta-economic performance. In some cases, the meta-economic performance (type 2 or 3) of a period may generate strictly economic performance (type 1) at a later time, but in some cases, meta-economic performance does not produce financial flows within the company.

In accordance, we argue that patronage and corporate philanthropy generate an interactionist relationship between receiving and giving, suggesting that this relationship also produces a positive return for the donor, which could be monetary or of a more subtle and elusive type, namely meta-economic performance.

Lastly, although not explicitly referring to Pierre Bourdieu in this paper, his pivotal studies play a central role: first, his theory on the forms of capital can be applied to the question of the type of return that philanthropists receive from giving; second, in the context of ‘world-making’ entrepreneurial philanthropists, symbolic capital can be identified as a return on philanthropic giving; third, Bourdieu was one of the leading pioneers in framing gift-giving as reciprocity (the dynamic by which the giving of an object necessitates the reciprocal exchange of another gift); lastly, one of his pupils, Ostrower (1997), examined how the wealthy employ charitable giving as a source of symbolic capital to distinguish themselves from peers, thus characterizing elite philanthropy as a field in itself.

## Patronage in the Golden Age of Augustus

### *Horace in Brief and the Gift of Amicitia*

Quintus Horatius Flaccus (8 December 65 BC – 27 November 8 BC), known in the English-speaking world as Horace, was the leading Roman lyric poet during the time of Augustus (former Octavian). His career coincided with Rome’s momentous change from a republic to an empire: an officer in the republican army, defeated at the Battle of Philippi in 42 BC, he was befriended by Augustus’ right-hand man in civil affairs, Maecenas. From an economic perspective, the first iconic moment in the life of Horace was the loss of his father’s estate in Venusia, confiscated for the settlement of veterans after the Battle of Philippi. Due to his growing *amicitia* (friendship) with Maecenas, he obtained from Augustus the sinecure<sup>3</sup> of *scriba quaestorius*, a civil service position at the Treasury, profitable enough even for members of the *ordo equester* (Nisbet 2007). Sometime between 34 and 33 BC, Maecenas gifted Horace the Sabine farm, probably not long after the publication of the first book of Satires. The gift, which included income from five tenants, would allow him to retire or at least spend less time at the Treasury. By this time, he had attained the status of *eques Romanus*, presumably as a result of his work at the Treasury (Nisbet 2007).

In this sense, Horace can be considered an artist who, also by virtue of his talent, received formal means of sustenance from the authorities – including the titles *scriba quaestorius* and *eques* – and a property. The relationship between the

<sup>3</sup>Generally a position requiring little or no work but giving the holder status or financial benefits.

donors and the receiver did not explicitly entail a formal condition of reciprocity, as the artist would commemorate his donors if (and only if) he deemed it appropriate.

As White (2012) notes, “In general the resources which support a modern writer were negligible or nonexistent in Rome”, since there was no mass market for the book trade, and neither royalties nor any kind of economic protection could be guaranteed to an artist after releasing a work, given that “anyone could copy his book and then sell or give it away; the sale of his books, therefore, would in any case scarcely have enriched a poet” (White 2012). Apart from some once-in-a-lifetime events (for instance, the secular games in 17 BC), Roman artists were unable to support themselves directly via their productions, but were affiliated with the upper class, as in the case of Horace, first as *scriba quaestorius* and then as *eques Romanus*. Through these services, poets would establish long lasting “ties of *amicitia* which yielded far greater rewards than any systems of fees or commissions would have done” (White 2012).

In this sense, some scholars prefer the term *amicitia* to patronage to signal the fact that the relationship is based mainly on elusive promptings of liberality rather than formal agreements (White 2012)<sup>4</sup>.

As such, poetry could be regarded as a career with a practical orientation, “Men with literary abilities found openings in Roman society that other men did not” (White 2012), especially via *amicitia* ties. In so doing, literary talent could provide access to the social élite, and thus to the benefits of friendship with the élite, from minor gifts to lucrative positions in private or public service. This type of direct or indirect support enabled artists to dedicate themselves fully to literature.

The gift of friendship, so meaningful for the analysis of Latin literature, assumes similarly attractive implications in the scientific realm.

In effect, and unsurprisingly, *amicitia* is widely mentioned by scientists when citing their protectors and givers.

For instance, in a passage in which the astronomer Copernicus expressed his gratitude to the friends that supported his studies, “The language is telling in its patronage-based implications: friendship and love were terms by which patron-client culture expressed its own relations. The client benefited from the patrons love by receiving things that could not be obtained in other ways. In turn, the tie between the two would be described as a friendship, insofar as their communications involved expressions of affection, confidentiality and familiarity” (Granada and Tessicini 2005).

*Amicitia* and *amicus* are in fact significant and familiar terms in Horace work, for instance, the book of Epodes opens with a salutation to “amice ... Maecenas”, Odes 2.9.5 again features the rare syntagm of vocative amice and proper name (*amice Valgi*), and in Odes 2.6 and 2.7, *amicus* is reserved for the closing line (White 2012). Throughout Roman literary history, the language of friendship was the standard expression with which relationships between writers and the elite

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<sup>4</sup>According to Bowditch (2001), “Augustus, by suggesting that Horace (with an eye to posterity) is potentially *embarrassed* by an intimate – *familiaris* – relationship with the emperor, ironically plays on the muddy distinction between patronage and friendship”.

were described, implying voluntary associations based ideally on sentiment (White 2012).

With regard to Maecenas, *amicus* patron and friend, Nisbet (2007) notes that up to 17 BC, the key political personality, repeatedly mentioned by Horace and other great poets of the time (Virgil and Propertius, for example) was precisely Maecenas. Conversely, from 17 BC onwards, references and poems were mainly dedicated to Augustus, especially by Horace. In this sense, Maecenas acted as a channel to convey to Augustus the emerging issues of land tenure, social justice, social values and priorities (Gold 2012). From 17 BC – the year of Horace’s *Carmen Saeculare* (amongst others) – the task of poets changed from describing the issues and challenges of the incumbent’s time to celebrating Augustus’ role in solving them. In fact, in *Carmen Saeculare*, Horace moved “into panegyric, for the poet’s mind was no longer engaged in wrestling with real problems; it was focused on the ingenious manipulation of themes of praise and panegyric for achievements already gained and issues now happily laid to rest” (Williams 2012).

A deeper understanding requires a more detailed look at Horace’s relationship with Maecenas, both in terms of the importance for his work and the length of time of their *amicitia* (which lasted from an initial meeting in the year 38 BC to their deaths in 8 BC).

In Horace’s work, Maecenas and the benefits received are abundantly cited, in fact, 26 times in 162 poems according to White (2012). Horace called Maecenas his ‘father’ and ‘king’ (Epistles 1.7.37), and in turn described himself to Maecenas as a “friend who depends on and looks to you” (Epistles 1.1.105). Moreover, in the Epodes, in the first book of the Satires, in the Odes and the Epistles, Maecenas is addressed before anyone else, effectively making him the dedicatee of the respective books. He also elicited more over-appreciative invocations than anyone else (White 2012), for example, “O Maecenas, scion of ancestral kings, my bulwark and my sweet ornament” (Odes 1.1.1-2), “Maecenas, proud ornament and mainstay of my affairs” (Odes 2.17.3-4), “Maecenas, descendant of Etruscan kings” (Odes 3.29.1-3), “Maecenas, hailed in my earliest muse as you shall be in my last” (Epistles 1.1.1-3).

On the other side of the exchange, Horace pointed out the benefits he received, both indirectly (close association with Maecenas brought him public attention, which in turn probably contributed to the success of his poetry), and directly. In Epistles 1.7.15, he forthrightly admits “Maecenas, you made me rich”, where the root sense of the word he uses for rich (*locuples*) is wealth in land and in writing, thus “Horace may have in mind the gift of property and specifically of his Sabine farm” (White 2012). However, this second segment of the circular relationship – the depiction of the benefits received – is nevertheless veiled, without a clear indication of ‘what’ and ‘when’ the gifts themselves were offered. Indeed, the relationship that emerges from a gift economy is complex, non-linear, with a disequilibrium both in time and in the amount of what is given and what is received.

*From the Gift of Amicitia to the Gift Economy*<sup>5</sup>

Bowditch (2001) starts her inspiring book on Horace by presenting an excerpt from the Epistle 2.1 to Augustus (here and later, the translation from Latin to English has been taken directly from her work while the original Latin text is in the footnotes).

Excerpt from Horace, Epistle 2.1 to Augustus, 257-270.

I have no patience for the service that burdens me, and I desire neither to be laid out anywhere in wax, with distorted features, nor to be celebrated in ill-formed poems, lest I blush presented with the boorish gift, and together with my poet, stretched out in a covered box, am borne into the street where they sell incense, perfume, pepper, and whatever else is wrapped in wastepaper<sup>6</sup>.

As to the meaning of the Latin words, *munera* translates as munificence, and as stated in a number of Horace's works, the poet received *dona* (gifts) for his *officia* (services).<sup>7</sup> The Epistle clearly demonstrates the diction of "the language of gifts and of services reciprocating benefactions, rather than a lexicon associated with coinage, buying, and selling" (Bowditch 2001). At the same time, this Epistle traces the line of gift patronage, whereas "the decorous gift of poetry presumably grows in value even as it ensures immortality" (Bowditch 2001), compared to a poetry marketplace, where poetry is nothing more than something 'wrapped in wastepaper' and easily bought on the streets.

The gift economy that permeated patronage in the Golden Age is a topic of great modernity, conveying the elements of an economy not purely based on market inputs<sup>8</sup>. In particular, if the market calls for a formal exchange, a concomitance of services and specific forms of remuneration, the gift economy is more elusive, as the exchange is not immediately perceivable as such, and the returns to the donor are of a specific kind, mostly non-monetary.

<sup>5</sup> A gift economy is an economic system of exchange. According to Bowditch (2001), "The practice of debt-bondage, or *nexum*, constitutes an early form of contract law: the person receiving a loan temporarily relinquishes his person and its labor to the creditor until the debt is paid off".

<sup>6</sup> Horace, Epistle 2.1 to Augustus, excerpt: "Nil moror officium quod me gravat, ac neque ficto in peius uoltu proponi cereus usquam nec prae factis decorari uersibus opto, ne rubeam pingui donatus munere et una cum scriptore meo capsula porrectus operta deferar in uicem uendentem tibi et odores et piper et quicquid chartis amicitur ineptis".

<sup>7</sup> *Munera* (singular *munus*) derives from the root 'mei', meaning to (ex)change. In other words, a *munus* represents a gift carrying the obligation of an exchange (Bowditch 2001).

<sup>8</sup> According to Bowditch (2001), recalling the work of Mauss (1990), "The gift-exchange psychology underlying Roman patronage involves more than a competition for status. Though the rivalrous consumption and giving away of goods constitute a 'war of property', the obligation to receive gifts ensures the opposite – the creation of social bonds. Three related features of the process of gift exchange contribute to this creation of community or social interrelatedness: first, the tendency of the gift to pass to a third party in place of pure reciprocation; second, the tendency of the gift to increase in value – that is, the reciprocal gift is often larger than the initial one that elicited it; and third, the frequent 'intermingling' of souls and objects, as Mauss would characterize it, that occurs when a person perceives the object given away as an extension of the self".

Horace would be creating, and in so doing, celebrating the dominant ideology of Augustus. In the notable words of Bowditch (2001) “The gifts, or *munera*, of public euergetism were a significant strategy by which both Augustus and the aristocratic elite cast an ‘ideological veil’ over their material base of power and thus successfully perpetuated it... That the tropes and conventions associated with literary patronage employ this same economic language suggests the degree to which poetry as a form of public expenditure similarly served the interests of ideology”. In this sense, Augustus managed to keep power by having “charmed all with the sweetness of leisure”<sup>9</sup>.

In a strictly economic perspective, the primary constituents of a gift economy are disequilibrium and the mystification of time. With reference to the former, the gift economy suggests a succession of *munera* and *officia*, which have elusive economic and mostly implicit emotional value, suggesting that the “impossibility of determining precise values leads each party to feel potentially still in debt to the other, thereby ensuring that the relationship continues” (Bowditch 2001). Moreover, along and across the lines of social status, “The recipient of a benefaction remains, in a sense, forever indebted to a benefactor of a higher order” (Bowditch 2001)<sup>10</sup>. With regard to the latter, the temporal delay between the first gift and its reciprocation binds the recipient to the donor, serving to mystify the economic aspect of this type of exchange. “Staggered and separated over time, the initial gift and its return appear spontaneous, voluntary, and unmotivated by the expectation of profit or the sense of obligation” (Bourdieu 1977).

The delay plays an increasingly central role, since it serves to “reproduce the relations of domination implicit in patronage by deflecting the necessity for return into the social sphere of *gratia*, with all its connotations of kindness, favor, and gratitude” (Bowditch 2001).

The bond, which is implicit in every relationship and exchange, is therefore of a voluntary and non-formal nature, and contributes to stimulating suggestions and networks of a more social than economic type. In fact, “The concomitant idea of ‘social bonds’ may be visible in the frequent language of ‘binding’ that appears in the prescriptive and epistolary material on social relations. That is, the contractual nature of debt-bondage and the libidinal bonds between persons, whether in a patronal relationship or in a more elite relation of *amicitia* between those of high status, may reflect the two directions into which the archaic economy, as Bourdieu would have it, split in two” (Bowditch 2001).

The relevance of the gift economy to entrepreneurship and management is evident. Indeed, there are countless examples of economic and social relations that are not necessarily market-based, and are in fact developed and nourished through the consolidation of the donor’s symbolic capital. Consider, for example, corporate giving and all the expenditures of organizations and individuals for non-profit

<sup>9</sup>Tacitus, *Annales* 1.2, excerpt: “cunctos dulcedine otii pellexit”.

<sup>10</sup>Seneca claimed that “to the [creditor for a benefit] I must make an additional payment, and even after I have paid my debt of gratitude, the bond between us still holds; for, just when I have finished paying it, I am obliged to begin again, and friendship endures” (Ben. 2.18.5). See also Oliensis (1998) who asserts, “if not literally in debt, he is in a condition of perpetual gratitude, the analogue of debt in the sphere of friendship”.



purposes (culture, health, environment, sports and leisure management), all imprinted by the gift economy. As an example, in 2014, the Italian billionaire Diego Della Valle, CEO of Tod's (a worldwide leading corporation in the shoe industry), donated via a foundation \$33 million toward restoring the Colosseum in Rome. In so doing, he shifted responsibility for the preservation of Italy's monuments from the government to private philanthropists<sup>11</sup>.

The features of a gift economy clearly emerge from the disparity amongst parties and the uncertainty of the return (economic or non-economic) in favor of the donor, which is prolonged over time, thereby mystifying precisely – through time – the reciprocal relationship.

On the role of symbolic capital, if it implies, as in the lessons of Bourdieu, both the status that the giver accrues and the debt or obligation that a donation imposes on another, this capital embeds both its main affinities and distances from the gift to the market economy. On one side, a form of economic calculation is “very much present in classical man” (Bowditch 2001), and on the other, the relationship is mystified in terms of time and space, and employs an inter-convertibility of material and symbolic capital that distinguishes the contours of the gift in respect of the market economy.

## Rehearsals of a Gift Economy: Augustus, Maecenas, and Horace on Stage

### *Methodology*

Our analysis is based on the literary works of the Latin poet Horace who lived in the Golden Age of Augustus, and was both one of the purest exempla of poetry and a recipient of important gifts via patronage from his patrons. We adopt a case study methodology to disentangle some of his poetic lines to propose a patronage and gift economy framework as the building blocks of corporate philanthropy and corporate social responsibility actions.

We chose Horace as our case study, as he “addressed poems or otherwise paid compliments to over sixty of his contemporaries, and he treated of social relationships in every sort of verse he wrote. He thus created a more detailed representation of his milieu than we have from any other Roman poet” (White 2012)<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>11</sup>From The Independent online, 7 September 2014.

<sup>12</sup>Another giant in Latin literature, and close friend of Horace, was Virgil. Relevant gift economy traits are also present in his works. Consider, for instance, the celebrated Eclogue 1 that depicts the dialogue between two shepherds. The first, Meliboeus, is forced to leave his homeland for reasons unspecified, and the second, Tityrus, rests in the shade of a beech tree singing in the breeze, having managed to keep his possessions thanks to the intervention of a young god. According to Bowditch (2001), “By presenting Tityrus's good fortune as the result of benefaction rather than a market economy, and by displaying the ineffectiveness of the latter when the shepherd wishes to buy his freedom, the poem essentially demonstrates the ‘inevitable’ necessity of patronage as a socio-economic system”. Furthermore, in Virgil, the excess of *gratia* in the gift economy also emerges: whereas he mentions, also in Eclogue 1, *maiora* (major) topics to be sung, the comparative strongly connotes the idea of excess or surplus value associated with *gratia*, alluding to “the paradox

We rely heavily on the seminal work of Bowditch (2001) and adopt her cultural approach. At the same time, we recognize that the deliberate use of works of literature as social documents might be problematic, thus calling for caution.

*The Gift Economy in Action: The Sabine Farm*

Maecenas gifting Horace the Sabine farm was certainly a form of economic return to the poet's benefit who in turn would celebrate the donor in his works. However, a more detailed analysis shows that Maecenas also imparted Horace with social status, thus bringing the artist closer to the ruling class: "Maecenas's gift of land to Horace – an economic or material value – had the far more important symbolic value of lending the poet the status of a landholder, a man of independent means; expenditure such as this, in turn, creates the symbolic capital that encourages Horace to celebrate his patron, creating the ultimate cultural value of Maecenas's immortality" (Bowditch 2001).

Indeed, Horace considerably emphasized this social status. "This loan of status, by which the gift reflects both on the recipient and back on the giver, is apparent in Horace's frequent use of the word *decus* to describe Maecenas in relation to himself: 'glory', 'ornament', 'honor' – the range of meanings suggests the honor that Maecenas confers on the poet through association with him and by his benefactions to him, as well as the glory that the poet reciprocates by honoring his patron in his poems" (Bowditch 2001).

However, social status is a mantle that must be worn in public to be appreciated as such, a gift that offered the poet glory and immortality. Thus, an audience of spectators is needed to capture the importance of the exchange. In other words, in the gift economy, the exchange – even if non-economic – is perfected in its exhibition. "This reciprocal exchange of status, in which giver and receiver are both distinguished by the gift, depends on a third party to witness the transaction ... Status depends, to some degree, on the envy of those who possess less" (Bowditch 2001).

Once again, useful suggestions emerge for corporate philanthropy: Philanthropists and corporations invest in corporate social responsibility actions (also) for their non-economic returns and the positive visibility that ensues. Consider, for instance, Asian tycoons who acquire North American sports clubs to gain legitimacy and increase their credibility in the international scenario.<sup>13</sup>

The gifting of the Sabine farm encapsulates the key features of the gift economy, positioned perfectly in the chronology of gifts and counter-gifts between Horace and his benefactors. Indeed, the Sabine farm itself was probably a benefaction constituting an expression of *gratia* from Maecenas for Horace

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that *gratia*, though returned, leaves behind an excess or residue, a trace of itself-something that, in fact, causes the favor to increase in value" (Bowditch 2001).

<sup>13</sup>From The New York Times online, 14 August 2019: "Joseph Tsai, a co-founder of Alibaba, the Chinese internet giant, is closing in on a record-breaking deal to gain sole ownership of the Nets, continuing a momentous off-season for a franchise making its most significant steps toward emerging from the shadow of the neighboring Knicks. The Nets deal, valuing the team at \$2.35 billion, will set a record for the purchase price of a sports franchise".

dedicating the Satires to him and for the ideological value of the poems. “Thus, as both a reciprocating benefaction for past services and a gift that continued to lay a claim on Horace, the estate symbolizes that very ambiguity and disequilibrium of debt so characteristic of a gift economy” (Bowditch 2001).

In line with Mauss (1990), a material gain, such as the Sabine farm, generates the symbolic capital of gratitude, which in turn becomes poetry that reaches an audience beyond the patron and contributes to the production of the dominant ideology.

In addition, Horace’s depiction of the Sabine farm “suggests an ideology about the artist and aesthetic production that simultaneously depends on, competes with, and often appropriates the terms of the socioeconomic discourse of patronage...on the one hand, the farm invokes the discourse of patron-client reciprocity – the very real gratitude that the Horatian speaker represents himself as feeling toward his benefactor, as well as the need to requite his gifts; on the other hand, the farm, the very gift that obliges, simultaneously allows Horace the liberty to renegotiate his debts” (Bowditch 2001).

Similarly, the above examples of wealthy and private philanthropists (from Della Valle to Tsai) convey on the one hand the evocative capacity and non-economic return of the investment (in particular, the increased visibility of philanthropists), and on the other hand, the artistic or athletic gesture, once executed, transmutes into something else, which in itself justifies and goes well beyond the mere relationship of reciprocity.

Such gestures, in fact, once outside the precise spatial and time specific context in which they are placed, turn into symbols - effective, as they are visible and tangible - of the biunivocal nature of the relationship, always evident, in the gift economy.

Starting from these premises, Satires 2.6 is traditionally considered as Horace’s thanksgiving letter to his patron for the Sabine farm, even if Maecenas is not explicitly mentioned. Below a key excerpt.

Excerpt from Horace, Satires 2.6, 1-15.

This was in my prayers: a measure of land not so large, with a garden and near the house a spring of pure water and above this [in addition] a little patch of woods. The gods have given me more and better. It is good. I ask for nothing more, son of Maia, except that you make these gifts lasting [truly mine]. If I neither make my property greater by crooked calculation, nor have diminished it through the vice of waste, if foolishly I pray for none of these things: “Oh, if that nearby corner could be added, which now skews my farm’s shape! Oh, if lucky chance would reveal to me a pot of money, as it did for him, who once the treasure was found plowed the same field as an owner which he had as a hired laborer, made wealthy by his friend Hercules!” If what is here now pleases me, grateful for it, with this prayer I ask: fatten the master’s flock and all else but his talent, and, as you are accustomed, always be my greatest guardian.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Horace, Satires 2.6, excerpt: “Hoc erat in votis: modus agri non ita magnus, hortus ubi et tecto vicinus iugis aquae fons et paulum silvae super his foret. auctius atque di melius fecere. bene est. nil amplius oro, Maia nate, nisi ut propria haec mihi munera faxis. si neque maiorem feci ratione mala rem nec sum facturus vitio culpave minorem, si veneror stultus nihil horum 'o si angulus ille

The opening is decisive wherein Horace claims that with the Sabine farm, the gods have given him “more and better”. On one side, Horace’s prowess is such that giving thanks for the gift is beautifully concealed, since neither the donor (Maecenas) nor the gift (the farm) are explicitly mentioned. On the other side, the fact that reference is made to a gift from the gods, and that this gift exceeds the poet’s wishes signal the importance of the gift and its excess, charming the reader with *ars poetica*.

Immediately after, rather surprisingly, the poet directly addresses the Son of Maia, Mercury, the God of commerce: the change of perspective, quite pronounced, introduces into the Satires the link between the gift received and the expectations that weigh on the poet. In other words, addressing the God of commerce means that the speaker “*voti damnatus* by the grant of the estate, is in the very condition of obligation that provided, according to Marcel Mauss’s early speculations, the origin of a contract, of *nexum* and action” (Bowditch 2001)<sup>15</sup>. However, the relationship emerges via a metaphor, rendering it nuanced, inferred.

In another perspective – since Mercury is associated with gain, luck, commerce, and communication – Horace calls upon this God to enhance his poetic works and bring himself financial gain.

The substantial theme of the poem, from a more general point of view, is the antithesis between the city and the countryside: Rome, where a few years earlier Horace was able to isolate himself in his moral meditation and poetry, no longer provided him any serenity or joy when he became famous and *amicus* to the powerful. As such, the poet was bothered by the petulant crowd, impatient with those who envy, and wanted only a quiet life: rather than an opulent home, luxury goods, refined furniture, and valuable dogs, he preferred parsimony and the simple food of the farm.

The modernity of the text and the comparableness with the philanthropic/corporate social responsibility mechanisms is evident: on the one hand, Horace complained about city life in the Augustan era, but at the same time, paid homage to Augustus, and implicitly paid tribute in his work to the peace and resolution of conflicts that Augustus brought with the empire. In this dialectic, *ars poetica* operates as a legitimizing agent.

Similarly, on 19 August 2019, the Business Roundtable (comprising the CEOs of the largest US corporations) announced the release of a new ‘Statement on the Purpose of a Corporation’ that includes all stakeholders (customers, employees, suppliers, communities, shareholders) as essential parts of any business<sup>16</sup>. In this

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proximus accedat, qui nunc denormat agellum! o si urnam argenti fors quae mihi monstret, ut illi, thesauro invento qui mercennarius agrum illum ipsum mercatus aravit, dives amico Hercule!, si quod adest gratum iuvat, hac prece te oro: pingue pecus domino facias et cetera praeter ingenium, utque soles, custos mihi maximus adsis”.

<sup>15</sup>In this sense, Bowditch explicitly cites Mauss (1990) who writes, “The mere fact of having the thing puts the *accipiens* in an uncertain state of quasi-culpability (*damnatus*, *nexus*, *aere obaeratus*), of spiritual inferiority and moral inequality ... in relation to the one delivering the contract”.

<sup>16</sup>Statement on the Purpose of a Corporation (from the Business Roundtable website): “Americans deserve an economy that allows each person to succeed through hard work and creativity and to lead a life of meaning and dignity. We believe the free-market system is the best means of generating good jobs, a strong and sustainable economy, innovation, a healthy environment and

sense, the Statement acts as a networking and legitimizing agent amongst two endpoints; the quest for profit (from the Business Roundtable) and the petition for greater awareness of the integrated dynamics of corporations (from society as a whole).

As in Horace's verses, the complexity of the conjunction is evident, rendering the balance between the different instances fragile and intricate<sup>17</sup>.

### *The Cornucopia, when Words Legitimize Power*

Odes 1.17 contains some important indications of Horace's approach to power and the role of the receiver towards his donor in a gift economy, in particular, the relevance of some non-economic returns for the donor and the legitimizing process via *ars poetica*. Below the first lines.

Excerpt from Horace, Odes 1.17., 1-28.

Often Faunus swiftly changes Lycaeus for lovely Lucretilis and all the while keeps the fiery heat and rainy winds away from my goats. Throughout the protected grove, safe from harm, the wives of the smelly he-goat stray seeking the hidden arbut and thyme, and the kid-goats fear neither green snakes nor warlike wolves, when, Tyndaris, the sloping valleys and smooth rocks have sounded deeply with the sweet panpipe. The gods protect me, my reverence and my Muse are dear to them. Here lush abundance of the riches of the country will flow to the full for you from the generous horn. Here, in a hidden valley, you will avoid the heat of the Dog Star, and on Teian lyre will sing of Penelope and glassy Circe contesting over one man. Here, in the shade, you will drink glasses of innocuous Lesbian wine, and Bacchus, son of Semele, will not mix in wars with Mars, and you will have no fear of impudent

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economic opportunity for all. Businesses play a vital role in the economy by creating jobs, fostering innovation and providing essential goods and services. Businesses make and sell consumer products; manufacture equipment and vehicles; support the national defense; grow and produce food; provide health care; generate and deliver energy; and offer financial, communications and other services that underpin economic growth. While each of our individual companies serves its own corporate purpose, we share a fundamental commitment to all of our stakeholders. We commit to: Delivering value to our customers. We will further the tradition of American companies leading the way in meeting or exceeding customer expectations. Investing in our employees. This starts with compensating them fairly and providing important benefits. It also includes supporting them through training and education that help develop new skills for a rapidly changing world. We foster diversity and inclusion, dignity and respect. Dealing fairly and ethically with our suppliers. We are dedicated to serving as good partners to the other companies, large and small, that help us meet our missions. Supporting the communities in which we work. We respect the people in our communities and protect the environment by embracing sustainable practices across our businesses. Generating long-term value for shareholders, who provide the capital that allows companies to invest, grow and innovate. We are committed to transparency and effective engagement with shareholders. Each of our stakeholders is essential. We commit to deliver value to all of them, for the future success of our companies, our communities and our country".

<sup>17</sup>In the notable words of Oliensis (1998), "One of Horace's distinguishing features as a poet, and one of the qualities that attracts me to his poetry, is the degree to which he confronts his own implicated and compromised position within society while maintaining the independence of his poems. The final sum of Horace's calculations, in any event, is the making of good poetry, by which I mean poetry that is not exhausted in or fundamentally compromised by the social exchanges in which it participates. That is the kind of poetry, so far as we can tell, that would be likely to please Maecenas. And it is the poet's best means of making his face".

Cyrus, that he might attack you, unfairly matched, with unrestrained hands and tear the garland, clinging to your hair, and your innocent clothes<sup>18</sup>.

In her inspired interpretation, Bowditch (2001) points out that the central *stanza* of the poem, particularly the words: “The gods protect me, my reverence and my Muse are dear to them. Here lush abundance of the riches of the country will flow to the full for you from the generous horn”, fully reflect the dynamics of patronage. First, the gods protecting Horace call forth the gifts of the regime, and second, the *cornucopia* (horn of plenty) explicitly ties the abundance of the gods to patronal relations and the plenty of *pax Augusta* (Bowditch 2001)<sup>19</sup>.

The dynamics of the relationship developed in the following way: Maecenas, the beloved friend, the expression of the gods, through his benevolence ascribed to Horace an abundance of gifts, in turn, the poet, via the gifts and *ars poetica*, transmuted the gifts into songs that celebrated both *pax Augusta* and Maecenas.

We next examine two interpretations, both plausible, for a better contextualization and some managerial implications.

According to some authors, Odes 1.17 captures Horace’s personal characteristics as a young republican militant in the army of the *Cesaricides*. Then, falling into the Prince’s circle of patrons and friends, Horace provided his contribution, as a civil poet, to the consolidation of the Augustan regime, seen as a guarantee of public peace and inner tranquility for those who prefer withdrawing into the private sphere and pursue an ideal of individual perfection (Nuzzo 2006). In addition, Odes 3.14 celebrates *pax Augusta* with the lines: “This day of celebration will drive away my pains: I am no longer afraid of riots nor violence of death, now that Caesar reigns over the world”<sup>20</sup>. With these words, Horace clearly shows that in his eyes, civil and personal motives are linked: the Roman people announced the victorious return of Augustus from the expedition to Iberia and were invited to celebrate this day as a festive occasion, freeing them from worries and fears; a festive day especially for the poet, as he felt safe as long as the Prince exercised his power (Nuzzo 2006).

In an alternative interpretation, leaving aside the authenticity of Horace’s sentiments, in a gift economy, the (non-monetary) return for the donor is the celebration, and in so doing, the receiver of the gift legitimizes his power.

<sup>18</sup>Odes 1.17 excerpt: “Velox amoenum saepe Lucretilem mutat Lycaeo Faunus et igneam defendit aestatem capellis usque meis pluviosque ventos. Inpune tutum per nemus arbutus quaerunt latentis et thyma deviae olentis uxores mariti nec viridis metuunt colubras nec Martialis haediliae lupos, utcumque dulci, Tyndari, fistula valles et Usticae cubantis levia personuere saxa. Di me tuentur, dis pietas mea et Musa cordi est. Hic tibi copia manabit ad plenum benigno ruris honorum opulenta cornu; hic in reducta valle Caniculae vitabis aestus et fide Teia dices laborantis in uno Penelopen vitreamque Circen; hic innocentis pocula Lesbii duces sub umbra nec Semeleius cum Marte confundet Thyoneus proelia nec metues protervum suspecta Cyrum, ne male dispari incontinentis iniciat manus et scindat haerentem coronam crinibus inmeritamque vestem”.

<sup>19</sup>The horn of plenty could lead to a more negative understanding, for instance, in the case of libidinal excess (Bataille 1985); *ars poetica* is deemed to limit and transmute this potential excess into art (Bowditch 2001).

<sup>20</sup>Odes 3.14 excerpt: “Hic dies vere mihi festus atras eximet curas: ego nec tumultum nec mori per vim metuum tenente Caesare terras”.

While the two interpretations are intertwined, even in the context of personal feelings of sincere approval of *pax Augusta*, Horace was aware that his *ars poetica* would act as an agent of legitimacy of the power in force. As such, in a broader perspective, patronage acts as a legitimizing process also in relation to corporate practices from social reporting to philanthropy.

In effect, corporate philanthropy, originally aligned with altruistic intention, should be used as well to deflect criticism from industries with reputations for poor environmental, social, or economic management.

Legitimacy theory, in effect, relies on the notion of a social contract between a company and the society in which it operates through various means, such as philanthropy, and social actions and disclosure as legitimation tools. At the same time, the literature suggests that large and publicly-owned companies particularly engage in corporate social responsibility activities and reporting because they are more visible and open to public scrutiny, hence with greater legitimacy needs.

The attitude to entrepreneurial philanthropy, the sponsorship of cultural events, supporting environmental and social issues, all reflect the same patronage mechanisms: on one side, the donor, and on the other side, the receiver, with a strategy of rewards and returns not necessarily in monetary terms.

Augustus measured the performance of his patronage via the enhanced consensus that Horace helped to nurture with his *ars poetica*. Similarly, corporate social responsibility policies express performance, not only in economic terms, but the greater visibility, social consensus, social cohesion, and acceptance of the corporation itself.

Nevertheless, non-monetary returns are difficult to measure, often emerge over a period of time, and are not necessarily received by the initial donor, in short, they are more elusive and problematic to capture through the usual cash inflows and outflows measurements<sup>21</sup>. However, unlocking the covert meanings of economic acting requires understanding the close interdependence between the economic factors, social factors, and corporate social responsibility expressions (as in the sponsorship of *ars poetica*)<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup>Interestingly, on the monetary/non-monetary returns Kräussl et al. (2016) point out, “Determining the fundamental value of an artwork is almost an impossible feat in itself. Under rational expectations, the fundamental value of an asset equals its discounted expected stream of cash flows (present value theory). It is relatively easy to obtain the expected cash flow earned by owning a share of stock (dividend) or a piece of real estate (rent). The ownership of an artwork, on the other hand, provides no claim for monetary return but some kind of convenience yield, which is also described as a “dividend of enjoyment”.. and as “esthetic pleasure” .. Thus, reasons closely dependent on the motivations and characteristics of the owner make it impossible to clearly quantify the return on art”.

<sup>22</sup>According to Campa et al. (2019), “The intersection between the arts and business is an interesting domain of study, considering the non-rational nature of the arts and the rationality that is often associated with business ...The traditional principle of ‘art for art’s sake’ assumes that arts institutions and artists should not be overly dependent on business if they are to be viewed as legitimate”. Similarly, for Lewandowska (2018), “[corporate philanthropy] programs based on development through the arts should be subjected to detailed and systematic review, and their methods – critically analyzed, so as not to become unsubstantiated promises or glamorous dummy, using arts in an instrumental or cynical way”.

*The Disequilibrium amongst Parties, Patronage at Stake*

If the Sabine farm was the gift received in answer to his prayers to the gods, the *munera* lured Horace (Satires 2.6 and Odes 1.17), and even if the plenty of *pax Augusta* was celebrated and truly welcomed (Odes 3.14), at a certain stage the relationship between Horace and Maecenas, *rectius* his patron along with Augustus, took a more articulated path, an evocative managerial interpretation. Below some lines from the Epistles 1.1 that first trace the new direction of patronage.

Excerpt from Horace, Epistles 1.1, 1-12.

By my first Muse glorified, to be glorified by my last, you, Maecenas, seek to confine me again in the old school, though I have been gazed upon enough and already awarded the foil. My age, my temperament are not the same. Veianius, having hung up his arms at Hercules' temple door, hides, concealed in a field, to avoid beseeching the crowd, repeatedly, from the edge of the arena. There is voice constantly sounding in my cleansed ear: "Wisely free the aging racehorse in time, lest he stumble at the very end, short of breath, a sight to be mocked." And so, I now set aside poems and other frivolous pursuits. The true and the proper, this is my care and query, and I am completely involved in this; I am storing up and setting in order those things which soon I may bring out to use<sup>23</sup>.

Two premises should be made. First, the Epistles came later than the Satires and Odes in the poet's life, and some commentators have argued that Horace was becoming less tolerant of the commitments of social life, feeling old age approaching. At the same time, without tackling the perplexity of the relationship between artists and power, Lee-Stecum (2009) believes that "the careful definition and in some cases active re-definition of power and freedom is at the heart of the ethical and social program of Horace's first book of Epistles", and that in those poems "the poet's concern with independence as a heartfelt expression of his desire for poetic freedom inspired by the changing circumstances of his life and social environment".

Based on these premises, the first four lines depict a diminishing weight of the debt of patronage: if Maecenas was glorified at the beginning of Horace's career, the relationship descended and the debt transmuted, since poetry came first<sup>24</sup>.

The reversal of the approach is such that the symbolic capital accrued by Horace through his celebration of Maecenas overturned the debt that Maecenas incurred in depending on the poet for immortality, inverting the hierarchy of

<sup>23</sup>Horace, Epistles 1.1, excerpt: "Prima dicte mihi, summa dicende Camena, spectatum satis et donatum iam rude quaeris, Maecenas, iterum antiquo me includere ludo? non eadem est aetas, non mens. Veianius armis Herculis ad postem fixis latet abditus agro, ne populum extrema totiens exoret harena. est mihi purgata crebro qui personet aurem: 'solve senescentem mature sanus equum, ne peccet ad extremum ridendus et ilia ducat.' nunc itaque et versus et cetera ludicra pono: quid verum atque decens, curo et rogo et omnis in hoc sum: condo et conpono quae mox depromere possim".

<sup>24</sup>Bowditch (2001) offers a relevant interpretation of the lyric and its rhythm: "Maecenas has received the first dedication and, rest assured, the line implies, he is to receive the last. But Horace's poetic inclination comes first, both in the line and in his generic choice (Prima ... Camena); it centers the line, implying that obligations diminish from this summit. By thus manipulating the dedicatory convention, Horace grounds the overt justification for refusing his patron".



patronage. “Aesthetic values have priority over the social or political *officia* of a dependent” (Bowditch 2001). Indeed, Horace used the metaphor of a retired *gladiator* who was bound (*addictus*) to his labor: now both retired, and in this sense, the economic meaning reinforcing Horace’s point of view of an obligation already in the past, no longer incumbent<sup>25</sup>. The setting is then turned upside down: via Horace’s *ars poetica*, Maecenas was made immortal, and then Horace dedicated himself to philosophy, hence reversing the relationship, and art reshaped the debt that was now the sole burden of the patron.

As mentioned, the disequilibrium and the alternation of debt provides some practical managerial implications. First, it is of certain interest for corporations to know in advance that their philanthropic activities carry the significant risk of not succeeding. What happens if the project fails to achieve monetary (and non-monetary) returns?

Corporate social responsibility projects, as well as patronage, face an imposing risk of failure, which in turn, *rebus sic stantibus*, deteriorates the cost of capital of corporations. Recent studies (e.g., Judd and Lusch 2018) find that, on average, when firms make large philanthropic donations, they experience an increase in their cost of capital. However, this effect, even if only partial, is mitigated by firms that have lower agency costs and are able to use corporate giving as a marketing tool. Other authors (e.g., Zolotoy et al. 2019) posit, with mixed results, that philanthropy-based inferences reduce investors’ agency concerns, and as such, reduce the cost of capital.

However, the corporation’s acknowledgment that the return of its social and cultural investments may not be attained could also be interpreted, from a management strategy point of view, as an expression of the (only apparent) willingness of the corporation to detach itself, at least in pure form, from the achievement of a specific and strictly positive return, whether monetary or not. Corporations are prepared and therefore accept the risk implicit in this strategy to assume the absence of returns (economic or not) from their investments. This in turn becomes beneficial, in strictly utilitarian terms, precisely because corporations are acting – in the community’s perception – for the common good, regardless of the tangible results in their favor. In other words, a return always ensues, either specific (in monetary terms or not, as for instance reputation, good standing or cultural respectability) or in the form of the absence of a specific return (generically). In effect, Augustus and Maecenas could have easily borne Horace’s progressive detachment over time in terms of the credibility of his role as a poet during *pax Augusta*.

Another area for discussion that arises from Epistles 1.1 is the challenge in expressing – in absolute terms – the volume of contributions received and the returns rendered.

The issue of measuring the impact of philanthropic activities is becoming highly divisive in management research. Some scholars – based on the usual

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<sup>25</sup>According to Bowditch (2001), “Horace takes images from the embedded economy of public expenditure on the gladiatorial *munera* and uses them to suggest the economic calculation behind patronage: he has already...earned his withdrawal from public themes and performance, and thus he has paid off his debt”.

valuation models exclusively for profitable activities – deem it advisable to adopt mechanisms such as SROI (Social Return on Investment). This index, deriving from the analysis of accounting and financial statements, necessarily requires translating into monetary terms the outcomes of the corporate social responsibility activities, whereby monetary value is assigned to the outcomes through determining the financial values that help demonstrate to stakeholders the importance of every outcome of the corporation's production. Therefore, this involves defining economic proxies for assets that often do not have a market value, also considering that for some goods (Horace's lyrics, for instance), there is no objective cost, but the result of subjective perceptions, thus highly problematic. In their broad review of the pros and cons of SROI, Maier et al. (2015) identify two fundamental limitations, namely adherence to a strictly utilitarian approach and eagerness for commensuration.

Regarding the approach, "SROI analysis is clearly indebted to the utilitarian idea that the proper course of action is the one that maximizes utility. This approach to ethics can be criticized from numerous perspectives, e.g. from a Kantian perspective, which suggests that it is not the consequences of an action that make it right or wrong but the motives of the person carrying out the action" (Maier et al. 2015).

With reference to the issue of commensuration (the comparison of different entities according to a common metric), "In SROI analysis qualitative issues are quantified, translated into monetary values, and compared to each other. Commensuration is never a neutral approach but inherently political. SROI analyses are particularly poignant in that they involve monetizing and comparing things that are often regarded as priceless and unique, like human lives, health or nature" (Maier et al. 2015).

The last managerial implication that emerges from the dichotomous relationship (in terms of patronage) between Maecenas and Horace, as developing in Epistles 1.1, is the absence in their relationship of a market mechanism able to regulate and institutionalize patronage, and more in general, philanthropic activities.

It is indisputable that the arts (and the art market) live in a context of economic uncertainty, mainly due to the independence of the quality assessment of the object from (most) of its intrinsic properties. "In the art market, quality is an intersubjective property that emerges from the contingent assessment of the artworks by the actors in the market and does not exist independently from it; interactions between actors allow the artistic significance of an artist or one of the artworks by that artist to be evaluated and for quality to be assessed" (Beckert 2020).

If the quality of artworks is the outcome of judgements from relevant actors in the market – buyers (museums, private collectors), sellers (artists, galleries, auction houses), and intermediaries (Beckert 2020) – then the value and preferences are not a reflection of individual taste, but an endogenous outcome of the market process, socially shaped (Beckert 2020).

Corporate philanthropy must therefore be placed within a context of market players who should be able, at least collectively, to assess the quality of the

outcomes of philanthropy itself, albeit not necessarily in monetary terms. The participation of several actors on the stage (corporations, not-for-profit organizations, collectivity, government, stakeholders in general) therefore contributes to mitigating, at least in part, the intricacies of measuring outcomes in numerical terms: instead, the economic value of each outcome should emerge from close negotiations between the different stakeholders. This aspect makes the context of patronage, at least its occurrence during *pax Augusta*, significantly different from corporate philanthropy, and a point of distinction between the two paradigms<sup>26</sup>. At the same time, the sounding board that the social interlocutors currently have at their disposal – also relative to negative discourses (for instance, corporate reputation) – is of course very different in terms of depth and range, from social networks to the Internet, and far less under the control of the donor and receiver.

As mentioned in the introduction, furthermore, Horace is a truly and entirely modern man. His continuous tension between public life and *ars poetica* has been variously interpreted, by scholars, in relation to his knowledge of Epicurean philosophy.

This is certainly not the place to investigate whether and what was his relationship with Epicurus (who, as is well known, despised poetry) and his philosophy, which Horace certainly knew and was influenced by.

Certainly he had no interest in physics and cosmology, which so passionately interested Lucretius, while at the very same time certainly the moral precepts of Epicureanism were repeatedly discussed and appreciated by him, although without any claim to systematicity and consistency (La Penna).

In other words, Horace's relationship with Epicureanism appears to be based not so much on a strict doctrinal adherence to the philosophical principles of the school, as on a deep, intimate consonance with an ideal of wisdom, on the sharing of a sober style, of an overall vision of life and the world, on an interiority that knows how to catch the essential in every situation and in every human event (Monaco 1992).

Whether he was an Epicurean or not, the continuous dialectic between a convinced adherence to the "world outside" compared to art and his own interiority make Horace a modern man, so well inserted in the dynamics of our time.

## Conclusion: Managerial Implications and Future Research Avenues

The life of Horace, one of the leading poets of the Golden Age of Latin literature, was characterized by a fruitful and multifaceted relationship with power (also from an economic perspective), nuancedly epitomized by Augustus and more directly by Maecenas.

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<sup>26</sup>A further difference between the gift economy/patronage and corporate philanthropy is the absence, in the case of *pax Augusta* patronage, of the need to conveniently allocate scarce resources. Conversely, in the case of the corporate philanthropy, corporations must always deal with this dimension, as they do not have unlimited financial resources to invest.

The iconic traits of the relationship between *ars poetica* and power are well depicted in some key lines of his poems: first, the explicit acceptance of the *munus* of the Sabine farm (Satires 2.6), then the persuasive and persuaded exaltation of *pax Augusta* that honored Horace with the horn of plenty (Odes 1.17), and final, sober demeanor, towards his old age, at that time well aware of both the gifts received and his talent for transforming them into pieces of immortality (Epistles 1.1).

To reveal the relationship between Horace and power, we have made use of an economic approach to patronage and the gift economy compared to the market economy. In other words, the gifts that Horace received were (more than) returned with his poetic work through a dyadic, complex, non-linear mechanism in a dynamic and continuous relationship of alternation of debt between the patrons and Horace.

Through adopting a multidisciplinary and organic approach, this study provides some elements of novelty. On one hand, the findings enable Latin literature scholars to better understand the economic phenomena that, at least in part, inspired and influenced the life and art of Horace, in both his human and personal sphere. On the other hand, from a managerial perspective, the nexus between patronage, the gift economy, and corporate philanthropy is elucidated.

First, while patronage enables the development of an economic relationship, even if in a non-linear, multi-faceted, and not always immediate way, corporate philanthropy induces relationships aimed at fostering positive results for the donor, be they economic or meta-economic, instantaneous or delayed.

The managerial implications are evident for non-profit corporations (engaging in cultural or humanitarian efforts) and some industries – for example, sports – where economic returns may not be a central element of the investment. In this sense, the gift economy as a theoretical framework, widely known in other research fields, is a relevant framework for the management domain. In particular, as in the gift economy, corporate philanthropy and corporate social responsibility express an elusive kind of economic relationship not punctuated in time or space, but with elements of significant value for both. This relationship implies intricacies with regard to the conventional measures of investments generally based on precise, analytical, and measurable data of cash inflows and outflows. In the case of corporate philanthropy, the results are not only uncertain, but challenging to measure with the usual monetarization mechanism.

Furthermore, Horace – even if profoundly rooted in the *ars poetica* of the Latin Golden Age – stands as well as a paradigmatic *exemplum* of modernity, especially in his diachronic and polymorphous relationship to public engagement.

Finally, this paper has some limitations that provide interesting avenues for future research. In particular, our case study focuses on only Horace, even if a pre-eminent poet of Latin literature. Likewise, we do not examine a specific corporate philanthropy strategy reconstructed via the gift economy framework. As such, fruitful venues of future research include enlarging the spectrum of economic activities to be disentangled via the gift economy framework, and developing in-depth case studies of specific corporate social responsibility and philanthropy actions.

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## For Inclusive and Sustainable Education: The Profile of the Educator and Pedagogist in Italy

By Amelia Lecce<sup>\*</sup> and Paola Aiello<sup>±</sup>

*The changes that have characterized contemporary complex societies and the need to affirm the values of social inclusion have led the Italian educational policy makers to debate on the professional quality within the educational field, to study its changes and its social impact. This debate has gradually led to a redefinition of the professional profile of the educator and the pedagogist giving rise to a legislative provision aiming at recognizing, regulating and protecting these professionals. According to this law, in particular, the socio-pedagogical educator and the pedagogist are required to have specific competences that could promote inclusive and sustainable educational actions. The present theoretical argumentative paper aims at presenting a synthesis of the long debate that led to the approval of Law 205/17 in Italy, involving policy makers and Italian scholars and academics in the redefinition of the educational professions. Specifically, it aims at highlighting the rational and the characteristics of the context which have supported the long legislative process within a conceptual dimension that considers inclusive education as an unavoidable framework for social sustainability.*

**Keywords:** *inclusive education, sustainable education, educator and pedagogist, Italy*

### Introduction

The present theoretical paper represents the synthesis of a long debate aimed at the realization of a Reform in Italy on the education professions. Indeed, starting from 2017, political decision makers and representatives of the Italian academic world have redefined the role of the education professions (Law 205/17)<sup>1</sup>.

The changes that have characterized contemporary complex societies and the need to affirm the values of social inclusion have conducted the Italian educational policy makers to question themselves about the professional quality of the educational field, to study the changes and the effects on a social level. The norm has redefined the professional profile of the educator and the pedagogist by regulating and preserving the profession.

In particular, according to this law, the socio-pedagogical professional educator and the pedagogist are required to have specific skills to carry out activities that take into account the specificity of the profession and the social and inclusive function of an education that can be defined sustainable (Sterling 2006).

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<sup>1</sup>Legge 205/17, commi 594-601. Gazzetta Ufficiale n. 302 del 29.12.2017. Entrata in vigore 1.1.2018.

The inclusive function of education lies in thinking in terms of valorizing personal multiplicity, beyond any form of "labeling" and "stigmatization" (Aiello 2018). Indeed, if the label "establishes a sense, a sort of order of the wearer" (Benasayag and Schmit 2004, p. 75), inclusive education aims at eradicating such thinking and believing in the educability of "each and every one" (European Commission 1996). Therefore, believing in "Education for All" (UNESCO 2000) means supporting the principle of equal opportunities and encouraging policies to promote the participation of each individual citizen in society.

An inclusive educational approach is based on the recognition of individual differences as an opportunity for subjective and collective enrichment (Sibilio and Aiello 2015), where difference is considered a fundamental right of expression of each individual (Sen 2008). Indeed, the education professions are characterized by competence in approaching problems, but also attention to the personal, social and ethical sphere (Sibilio and Aiello 2018).

The different educational contexts (school-family - digital education - educational services - adult education - teacher training) (Riva 2018) are the contexts where the "alliance" between education and society for "sustainable participation" is enhanced (Riva 2018, Sterling 2013).

In the light of the new professional profile and the change of perspective of the welfare systems (Donati and Solci 2011, Giddens 2001) it seems appropriate to think about the skills of the educator and the pedagogist by identifying in the knotworking (Engeström 1995, 2000, 2008, Engeström et al. 2012) a possible model of application.

### **The Professional Recognition of Educators in Italy**

In Italy, the professions of the educator and the pedagogist, today, appear strategic in the perspective of an indispensable innovation of the welfare system, according to a promotional and regenerative approach (Iori 2018). Although for a long time these figures have been seen as professionally weak (Glazer 1974) because they derive from a weak knowledge (Iori 2018), they have been strongly defended by the world of professional and student associations that have claimed the urgency of a new professional dignity.

Within the Italian context, the need to generate a new welfare system has led to the definition of new profiles of professional skills. Indeed, the professional profile is structured on the basis of the implementation of actions of support, exchange, enhancement of the characteristics and resources of each person (Iori 2018). The law aims to create new virtuous circuits where citizens recognize themselves as communities and encourage assistance, support, exchange and promotion of the resources present in each person. The beneficiary of a service is not simply a citizen (seen as a passive user of a service), but an active protagonist and generator of a new system of regenerative welfare.

Indeed, the law on the professional recognition of educators is affected by the diachronic and synchronic dimension of education (Scurati 1986) conveying a new educational message that allows a change of perspective of the welfare



system<sup>2</sup> (Fiorentini 2006, 2016, Fiorentini and Calò 2013).

In Italy, in the period prior to the reform, there was no higher education requirement for the profession and therefore everyone could work as an educator (Iori 2018). The law recognizes more than one hundred thousand educators and pedagogists working on the national territory, but also protects those who carry out work without an academic title, providing a university training course to obtain 60 university credits useful for the equivalence of the three-year degree. The intensive training course to acquire the 60 university credits is tailored on those who have already passed a national examination related to the profile of educator, on those who have worked as educator for at least three years and on those who have a qualifying diploma issued within the 2001/2002 school year from an institute or a magisterial school (L. 205/17).

Indeed, Italian universities, in compliance with paragraph 597 of the aforementioned law, are preparing for the introduction of an intensive course in the socio-psycho-pedagogical disciplines.

For this reason, in line with European and international guidelines, a reform has been implemented in Italy to regulate the professions of Educator and Pedagogist. The reform ensures homogeneous services and adequate educational interventions throughout the country according to the needs of the population.

With the law 205/17, the socio-pedagogical professional educator is involved in educational and training activities dedicated to the planning, implementation and evaluation of educational and training interventions and treatments directed at the person in the areas and services.

The educator becomes a companion and facilitator of the learning processes in the contexts of lifelong learning and professional training, as well as *trait d'union* in favor of job placement. Finally, he is recognised as a mediator in the definition of training policies, planning and management of network services in the territory in a collaborative vision for the activation of integrated systems for the management and enhancement of resources (Disegno di legge, n.2443)<sup>3</sup>.

According to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)<sup>4</sup> ranking, the socio-pedagogical professional educator, after the degree course in Education (L-19) should have acquired:

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<sup>2</sup>The welfare state is a set of public policies that participate in the process of modernizing a state. Through these measures, the State provides its citizens with protection against risks and guarantees them pre-established needs, in the form of assistance, insurance or social security. It introduces, among other things, specific social rights as well as specific financial contribution duties. The four main actors of the welfare state are: State; family; market; third sector (Ferrera 1993).

<sup>3</sup>Senato della Repubblica Italiana, Disegno di Legge (Delega per la riforma dell'organizzazione del Governo e della Presidenza del Consiglio dei ministri [Disciplina delle professioni di educatore professionale socio-pedagogico, educatore professionale socio-sanitario e pedagogista]), n. 2443. XVII Legislatura, 21 giugno 2016.

<sup>4</sup>The QEF is a European certification able to make professional qualifications homogeneous in different European countries with the aim of comparing education and training. The classification ranges from level 1, which is equivalent to the achievement of compulsory schooling, to level 8, which corresponds to the highest level with the acquisition of the title of research doctor or equivalent (European Commission 2009). The socio-pedagogical educator is part of the 6<sup>th</sup> level of the EQF. The educator, on the other hand, is part of the 7<sup>th</sup> level of the EQF.

- advanced knowledge of theories and principles useful in workplace or study;
- advanced problem-solving skills;
- technical and professional skills in team management.

The qualification of pedagogist is obtained by earning a master's degree in Design and management of educational services (LM-50), Adult and Lifelong Education (LM-57), Pedagogy (LM-85), Theories and methodologies of e-learning and media education (LM-93) (L. 205/17).

The pedagogist carries out activities of design, planning, organization, coordination of territorial educational and training services, management, monitoring, evaluation, consulting and supervision of the pedagogical quality of public or private educational and training systems. It also carries out pedagogical actions addressed to single individuals. The pedagogist should have:

- highly specialized theoretical knowledge able to solve problems within a specific field;
- problem solving skills to be implemented through the exchange of knowledge from different disciplinary fields;
- strategic competence in the management of complex work or study contexts.

The recognition of the new professional identity acknowledges that the educator plays a central role as a promoter of active and responsible citizenship (Council of Europe 2010). The reform in favor of educators shifts the debate on the principle of sustainability by promoting the adoption of behaviors and attitudes that respect people, the environment, the individual, local and global communities (Chiappetta Cajola 2018).

Therefore, the educational difficulty consists in formulating effective intervention models, able to significantly affect future generations. For this reason, the educational intervention should tend to create opportunities and conditions that aim at improving the quality of life<sup>5</sup>.

## The Sustainable Educator

The World Commission on Environment and Development (Commissione Brundtland 1987) was the first to introduce the concept of sustainable development.

In the document *Our Common Future*, also known as the Brundtland Report (after the Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, then president of the WCED), "sustainable development is a form of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy

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<sup>5</sup>The concept of quality of life assessment was introduced for the first time in Italy by the Finance Act 163/2016, which speaks of BES (Benessere Equo e Sostenibile) (Santerini 2018). This concept is based on the idea that the quality of life of individuals cannot be based only on the increase in wealth, but also on the acquisition of human rights, on laws in favor of inequalities, on the autonomy of women (Stiglitz et al. 2013).

their own" (Commissione Brundtland 1987). This definition highlights the ethical responsibility of current productively active generations towards future generations.

Nowadays, the term sustainability is too often used in a generic, often improper way. It is used as an adjective to describe nouns such as development, tourism, company, etc., implicitly considering this word to refer to environmental sustainability, when, in reality, it is not so. Indeed, there are many and more complex aspects concerning the sustainability profile of human interventions on the territory and on the environment, keeping in mind that these terms are not synonymous: if the territory is a physical space on which typical human activities take place such as traditions, culture, etc., the environment is the location in which the individual resides. Surely environmental sustainability cannot be considered separately from economic, financial or social agendas. Therefore, global sustainability is connected to safeguarding the environment, defending local identities and the real feasibility of projects that respond to a territorial vocation (Forlani 2010).

It deals with the possibility of considering sustainability as a synergic system that embraces multiple fields of action: from the environment to culture, from education to the economy and from society to Corporate Social Responsibility<sup>6</sup> (Bandini and Ambrosio 2012, Bandini 2015, Maloni and Brown 2006).

There are different kinds of sustainability: for example, in the economic sphere, a company is truly sustainable if it is able to set its own business strategy harmoniously combining the "3Ps": Profit, Planet, People (Elkington 1997, 1999, 2004).

A sustainable society is a society that believes in future generations, which looks ahead, which is flexible and wise, (Sterling 2013, Sennet 1999), which recognizes that ecological, social, ethical and economic aspects as extremely valuable, precisely because they are all interconnected, opening useful passages to new types of knowledge and new collaborative forms.

This assumption demonstrates the impossibility of disconnecting the various disciplinary fields from an ecological and sustainable perspective, where it is necessary to work on the medium and not on the aim, on the path to take and not only on the result.

The current educational challenge is precisely to face complexity through alternative actions or models reflecting on sustainability in general and educational sustainability in particular (Malvasi 1995).

Education is a *conditio sine qua non* to create a more sustainable and more

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<sup>6</sup>The Lisbon European Council, in March 2000, identifies Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a best practice to follow to improve employment and social cohesion. CSR has now become a widespread practice in the new millennium (Pedersen 2006) and is considered an effective strategy for creating a competitive and socially cohesive society.

The CSR identifies virtuous practices and behaviors that a company can adopt, it also seeks to obtain results that can bring benefits and advantages to itself and to the context in which it operates. Particular attention is paid to relations with its stakeholders: stakeholders, suppliers, customers, partners, communities and local institutions, realizing concrete actions towards them. This translates into the adoption of a company policy that is able to reconcile the economic objectives with the social and environmental objectives of the reference area, with a view to future sustainability (Bandini and Ambrosio 2012, Bandini 2015).

peaceful world, though this requires a necessary shift in thinking. The quality, intensity and level of learning that takes place on a global scale over the next ten or twenty years will determine the action to take: the one that leads to ecological sustainability or the one that moves away from it (Sterling 2013, Sterling 2009).

To re-establish education in a sustainable perspective, we need to look beyond the world of education, which often appears too closed, and try to open up to the different disciplinary fields that focus on the quality of life of human beings: sustainable education can only emerge if it can connect and draw strength from a positive cultural change in a social context. The roots of a new post-modern educational paradigm must be found in many "growth areas" converging within an enlarged society, which somehow reflects systemic thinking: revisionist post-modernism, the ecological movement and the corresponding view of the world, the science of complexity, participatory and ecological democracy, the theory and practice of ecologically sustainable development (Sterling 2013).

In 1998, in England, a working group for the Government Commission on Education for Sustainable Development produced an essential document for educators who should know how to operate in terms of sustainability. The key concepts for a sustainable education are certainly the interdependence of disciplines and knowledge (characterized by a continuous exchange between society, economy, environment and from local to global aspects); participation in active and responsible citizenship; the promotion of differences as an added value of a community and from promotion of the quality of life and respect for the environment.

In the light of these key points, Sterling (2013) has developed his reflection on sustainable education, introducing a tripartite model characterized by three types of educational qualities: extensive, connective, integrative.

Sustainable education is extended when:

- it enhances the uniqueness and potential of each individual or group, bringing out the qualities of each environment and considers personal and local knowledge to be of fundamental importance for learning;
- it adopts ethical principles by extending the concept of care from society to nature in a future perspective;
- it transforms a theory into a new practice in the various educational fields;
- it adopts the human holistic capacity, related to the person's need for learning, understood in its totality, by different individuals and groups;
- it adopts epistemic principles, because it is aware of its own way of seeing the world and of the basic values that are reviewed and critically examined;
- it orients its purpose to the future as it projects its gaze of interest to the future;
- it orients values with the intention of producing beneficial changes for all of humanity.

Education is connective when it is:

- contextual, in the sense that it adheres to the real world because it responds

to its needs;

- re-centered, in the sense that it hopes for a sustainable lifestyle by linking human and natural ecology, social equity and the future;
- critical and ideologically aware;
- relational, in the sense that it connects the models of change, in the various disciplinary areas, in the local-global, past-present-future, personal-social, environmental-economic, human-natural perspective;
- pluralistic, in the sense that it reflects and evaluates the multiple modes of knowledge;
- multi and trans-disciplinary, with reference to various areas of knowledge are not delineated by boundaries allowing for collaboration in the face of complex issues.

Education is integrative when it is:

- process-oriented, in the sense that “it builds meanings through a process of learning based on involvement and participation, which includes different learning styles. We are all learners, including teachers and officials” (Sterling 2013, pp. 107–108);
- balanced, in the sense that it takes care of the individual as a whole, respecting the affective and cognitive sphere, the objective and subjective dimension and the personal and collective level;
- inclusive, referring to each individual for the duration of their life;
- synergetic, in the sense that it plans curricula, organization, management and culture to develop reciprocally (Sterling 2013);
- open and inquiring, stimulating curiosity, intuition, creativity;
- various, in the sense that it recognizes the different ways of teaching and learning;
- a learning community, in the sense that communities must actively participate in the construction of meaningful and reflective learning that respond to a systemic approach;
- autonomous in the organization, in the sense that it activates processes of subsidiarity and active and participatory democracy (Cfr. Sterling 2013, pp. 106–108).

Sterling’s assumptions are fundamental to initiate a systemic and logical process of change towards sustainable education for communities and their members. Furthermore, a sustainable educator gives value to the people of a given community and recognizes their strengths, since he believes that every individual has the potential to act directly on the educational system.

Therefore, the educator becomes the promoter of a profitable communication between the individuals involved in the educational process, as collaboration always represents a moment of professional growth. The sustainable educator creates solid network agreements with the local authorities, recognizing the importance of teamwork in implementing projects that have a transformative value for the territory. Additionally, the educator identifies possible alliances both inside

and outside the working environment, through personal contacts or through websites that deal with Education for Sustainable Development<sup>7</sup>.

### **The Educator's Project Design Skills**

Law 205/2017 encourages flexible and sustainable educational actions; qualities that affect the construction of strong relationships between the various actors of the Third Sector. Therefore, the educator becomes a real agent of change, a professional who has all the skills to act in a transformative way on the system. The professional educator could have a positive impact on welfare as she/he knows the real needs of the users and the functioning of the institutions. Indeed, the aim of the educational action is not only the output, but also the outcome and the impact of that action<sup>8</sup>.

These reflections are conceptually linked to the Third Sector Reform, initiated with law 117/2017, which recommends, among other innovations, the adoption of the social impact assessment of the activities carried out.<sup>9</sup>

For this reason, it is necessary to promote the design competences of the educator and the pedagogist.

A competence is the integrated and harmonious synthesis of knowledge, knowing how to be and knowing how to act (Pellerey 2004). Within educational services, design competence is the combination of the operator's technical ability and experience. The good educator knows how to control variables, adopting the principles of flexibility, innovation and sustainability (Traverso 2018, 2011).

An effective educational project should be organized in four areas:

- personal area, as it examines the subjective conditions of the related behaviours;
- social area, as it concerns the commitment of the individual to a Community commitment perspective;
- spatial area, as it affects the relations between the various actors involved;
- temporal area, as it can be placed and sustained over time (Cfr. Santerini in Sclaunich et al. 2010, pp. 89–93).

An educational project should consider the individual not as a single unit, but as part of a heterogeneous whole in which the singularities of each are respected

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<sup>7</sup>A website that aims to promote sustainable education is <http://asvis.it/educazione-allo-sviluppo-sostenibile/>.

<sup>8</sup>The term outcome refers to all observed changes (expected, unexpected, positive and negative) in the recipient, in the short, medium and long term. Impact is defined as "correct outcomes". Effect and impact are synonymous, while outcome expresses the change observed (Ferri et al. 2016).

<sup>9</sup>The Non-Profit sector in Italy is made up of voluntary organisations, social promotion associations, philanthropic organisations, social enterprises, associative networks, mutual aid societies and any other body (association or foundation) that pursues civic, solidarity and non-profit social utility aims. With the approval of the Third Sector Reform, we are trying to put order in the Italian "non-profit" world. One of the objectives of the Reform is the promotion of active citizenship, cohesion and social protection, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity (Pagamici 2017).

and enhanced (Santerini in Sclaunich et al. 2010).

### **A Possible Model for the Promotion of Sustainable Education: Knotworking**

To achieve specific educational goals, the educator should develop mediating skills, but working in groups composed of different professionals often seems to be complicated.

One can say that non-profit is an island with few bridges. This metaphor is intended to underline the difficulty of building significant relationships with the whole economic, social and educational field. Therefore, the educator and the pedagogist could become incisive and pioneering to facilitate this dialogue. For this reason, it is possible to find in knotworking a possible model for orienting educational activity in the complex interweaving of professional relationships.

In these years, pedagogy has focused its attention on the analysis of the educational action in different life contexts by introducing the concept of an integrated training system.

The integrated training system is a model that is based on the evolution of the meaning of the territory and the local community that goes beyond the physical-geographical meaning and that is interested in the productive, social, educational, family and associative dimensions.

There is an evolution of the spatial paradigm in favor of a relational paradigm that studies the relationship between educational agencies and resources (Perla and Riva 2016).

Within this theoretical scenario, knotworking could represent a possible model for the promotion of sustainable education. The studies on the knotworking model were developed at the Center for Activity Theory of the University of Helsinki, by Engeström and his collaborators. This model was developed to understand the organization of educational contexts and to promote the intervention of educators (Engeström 2000, Engeström et al. 2012, Kerosuo 2015). It is rooted in activity theory and in the theoretical framework developed by Vygotsky, Leont'ev, Rubinstein and Luria, who affirm that there is a close link between social actions and the cultural system of reference. The "product", indeed, is the consequence of a mediation between the "tools", a "subject" and an "object" (Zucchermaglio 1996). Today, thanks to the studies of Engeström, the activity theory has been expanded to be more functional to the demands of the new forms of work organizations "for require negotiated 'knotworking' across boundaries. Correspondingly, expansive learning increasingly involves horizontal widening of collective expertise by means of debating, negotiating and hybridizing different perspectives and conceptualizations" (Engeström 2000, p. 960).

The context in which the educational activity takes place, according to the Activity Theory, is oriented to the process and sharing of significant relationships (Rivoltella 2003). Today, the relationships and the context are characterized by physical environments, social relationships, languages, media, technological devices, artifacts, etc. (Rivoltella and Rossi 2017).

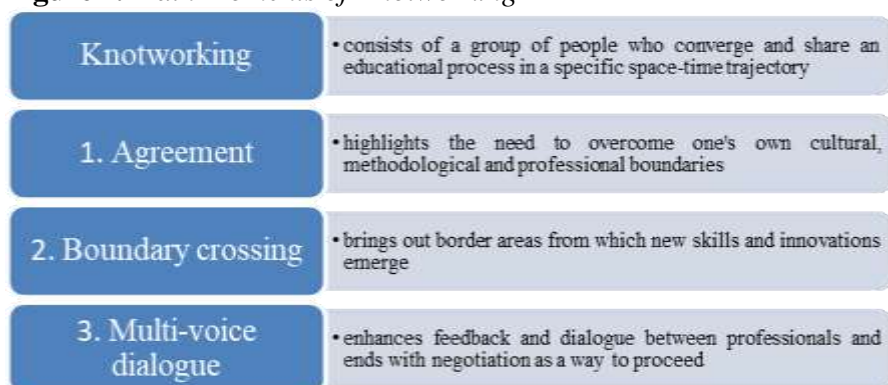
A knotworking consists of a group of people who converge and share an

educational process in a specific space-time trajectory (Bonometti 2008). Some moments are characterized by more intense activities, others, instead, need to establish weak ties to make the tension loosen. The prerogative is to establish a web of relationships in a given period of time so that a shared result can be achieved, through negotiation processes (Perla and Riva 2016).

Therefore, knotworking is not only a model of interaction between several actors engaged in a project, but it can become an opportunity for learning and growth for the professionals involved in the action.

Engeström, based on the theory of expansive learning develops the Change Laboratory process (Engeström et al. 1996, Virkunen 2013). The Change Laboratory is based on three main moments: Agreement; Boundary Crossing; Multi-Voice Dialogue (see Figure 1). The Agreement highlights the need to overcome one's own cultural, methodological and professional boundaries; Boundary Crossing brings out border areas from which new skills and innovations emerge; Multi-Voice Dialogue enhances feedback and dialogue between professionals and ends with negotiation as a way to proceed (Engeström 2000, 2008 in Perla and Riva 2016).

**Figure 1.** *Main Moments of Knotworking*



The intervention promotes collaborative actions (knowledge spiral) and networking among professionals in order to facilitate the learning process of all.

In this sense, knotworking can be viewed as networking and teamwork among diverse professionals whose goal is the educational success of individuals with educational needs (Engeström 2008). The model is useful in complex educational contexts, where often the figure of the educator collaborates with other professionals of the field, such as teachers, social services operators, doctors. The educator and pedagogist could find in knotworking a possible inclusive educational model to be used during his/her professional work.

Indeed, knotworking is an inclusive model because it aims at promoting learning processes. Learning in broader cultural contexts therefore requires a competence in planning, programming, organising and coordinating territorial educational services, that is perfectly in line with the profile outlined for educators and pedagogists.



## Conclusion

Thinking in terms of sustainability produces important benefits in educational, social and economic terms because it develops and supports the inclusive model, where each subject feels valued based on the influence he/she has of acting on the world. Adopting a sustainable perspective is a revolution in the way of thinking of citizens and educational figures because it has implied in its educational action a critical, relational, autonomous, participatory competence in democratic rights and responsibilities.

Sustainable education stimulates interdependent relationships among society, economy and the natural environment at all levels - from local to global, in a logic of acceptance of cultural differences - empowering the idea that an inclusive society is "possible and necessary". In this sense, the principle of Education for All is the promoter of an educational policy aimed at identifying educational methods.

In the light of what has been said so far, we can define the figure of the educator and pedagogue, as expressed in Law 205/17, as having a sustainable orientation, because it has implicit in its educational action an inclusive value that recognises the individual peculiarities of each individual and acts in order to promote them. Reasoning on the design skills of new professionals means structuring ad hoc university courses, functional to a process-oriented work vision.

Indeed, the law 205/17 suggests a professional profile competent in the exploitation of individual and collective resources. In fact, the Law 205/17 suggests a competent professional profile in the enhancement of individual and collective resources through more integrated and flexible teamwork.

In the wake of these reflections, it is possible to find in the Engeström's knotworking model a possible guideline to facilitate the complex educational work, make it more flexible, networking it with the various professionals, within a sustainable perspective.

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