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ASSAM International Refereed Journal (ASSAM UHAD) is published in order to bring the researches and scientific studies carried out in the field of social sciences to the academic literature.

ASSAM UHAD "ASSAM International Refereed Journal" has been published as of 2014. In our journal, publications of quality and value that will provide a source for the literature are included. Our journal is a refereed journal and has published two issues a year until 2017. Between 2017-2020, three issues were published electronically in April, August and December annually, and as of 2020, two issues were published annually in April and November. Until 2023, our journal, which was published in the form of 'Volume' and 'Issue', continues its publishing life only in the form of issues as of 2024. Our journal has adopted a paid publication policy as of 2025 November issue. Fee information is available in the fee policy section on our journal page. As of 2026, the journal will be published only in English. Our journal includes all kinds of publications that can be evaluated within the field of social sciences. Since October 2017, articles have started to be accepted through the Ulakbilim Dergipark system.

Our journal is an online publication. As a material that includes studies prepared in the academic field, it is a social organ that provides social service in order to benefit institutions and individuals conducting scientific research. Access to our journal as published on the internet is free of charge.

Each publication submitted to the journal is approved by at least two referees who are experts in their fields. In order for the articles to be published, the referees must give a positive "publishable" report. Only one publication of the author/authors can be published in the same issue. Approved studies are queued and published in the following issues. No author has any influence on the referees and the members of the Board of Directors.

The works accepted in our journal and entitled to be published in our journal are edited and uploaded to the system in accordance with the journal's publication acceptance conditions and spelling rules. Authors/authors and readers who need it can meet their needs by downloading this issue from the system.

Editor-in-Chief
Professor Ali Fuat GÖKÇE

Editorial

Dear Readers,

We are proud and delighted to once again meet with you, our valued academics, researchers, and readers, with the 27th issue of ASSAM International Peer-Reviewed Journal. As with every issue, this issue brings together original works from different disciplines, aiming to contribute to knowledge production and the academic discussion environment.

Since its inception, ASSAM UHAD has gone beyond being merely a publication; it continues its mission as a platform for thought that adapts to the changing dynamics of the academic world and addresses local and global issues from a scientific perspective. The articles in our 27th issue have been written in line with this mission, covering a wide range of topics such as political science, international relations, law, economics, security studies, and social and human sciences. Each of these studies, which offer original contributions in their respective fields, aims to help us understand today's rapidly changing social, political, and economic conditions.

In an age where scientific knowledge is constantly being renewed and boundaries are becoming increasingly blurred, the accessibility of academic production is as important as its quality. Thanks to its open access policy and peer-reviewed structure on the DergiPark platform, our journal democratizes access to information and brings together the views of researchers in the field under one roof.

We sincerely thank our reviewers, who perform their duties meticulously during the publication process; our valued authors, who enrich our journal with their scientific contributions; our editorial board; and all our colleagues who contributed to the preparation of the publication. The continuity and reliability of academic production are only possible as a result of this effort and dedication. It is our hope that the 27th issue, like our previous issues, will find its place in the scientific world, open new horizons for researchers, and encourage intellectual production. With the hope of meeting again in new issues, we extend our greetings and respect to all researchers who advance under the guidance of science, thought, and truth.

Editor
PhD Student Muhammed AKSU

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Şiddet Sarmalında PKK

PKK In The Spiral Of Violence*

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Özet

Halkı siyasi otoriteye karşı caydırmaya çalışan terörizm genel olarak baskı ve korku ile güvensizlik atmosferi oluşturmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu güvensizlik ortamında açık ve gizli amaçlarına ulaşmak için şiddet kullanımını tercih edip halka ve siyasi otoriteye karşı bu yöntemden faydalanmaktadır. Bundan dolayı Türkiye'nin karşı karşıya kaldığı terörizm faaliyetleri birçok olumsuzluğa neden olmaktadır. Terör örgütü PKK'nın Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin huzur ve refahını hedef alan birçok eylemi bulunmaktadır. Silahlı mücadelenin yanında örgüt zaman içerisinde bu tür faaliyetleri gerçekleştirerek siyasallaşma amacını da gütmektedir. Örgüt baskı altında tuttuğu bölge halkının desteğini alarak amaçlarına ulaşmayı düşünmektedir. Terör örgütü bulunduğu coğrafyanın temsilcisi olduğunu ileri sürerek Kürt kökenli vatandaşları kontrolü altına almaya çalışmaktadır.

***Anahtar Kelimeler:** PKK, Terör, Şiddet.*

Abstract

Terrorism, which tries to deter the public against political authority, generally creates an atmosphere of oppression, fear and insecurity. In this environment of insecurity, it prefers to use violence to achieve its overt and covert goals and uses this method against the public and political authority. Therefore, the terrorism activities that Türkiye faces cause many negativities. The terrorist organization PKK has many actions targeting the Republic of Türkiye. In addition to the armed struggle, the organization has also achieved its goal of politicization by carrying out such activities over time. The organization thinks of achieving its goals by gaining the support of the people of the region it oppresses. The terrorist organization has tried to include citizens of Kurdish origin in its scope by claiming that it is the representative of the geography it is located in.

***Keywords:** PKK, Terror, Violence.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Terrorism is regarded as one of the greatest threats of the modern age. This issue continues to be one of the most debated topics on the international stage. It can be argued that the reactions developed by the founding ideology of the Republic against the political and social heritage inherited from the Ottoman period paved the way for Turkey's necessity to combat various terrorist activities. Another reason Turkey is targeted by terrorism is its geographical location. Since the 1960s, terrorism has been one of the country's most significant challenges. At different times, Turkey has been the target of various terrorist organizations: it contended with Armenian terrorism between the 1970s and 1980s, and from the 1980s onward, with PKK terrorism. Furthermore, during the 1990s to the 2000s, it can be said that Islamic terrorist organizations were more active.

The founding of the PKK terrorist organization can be traced back to the Democratic Patriotic Higher Education Association, which was established by Abdullah Öcalan and university students around him. The organization's first meeting was held in Ankara in 1975, after which Öcalan was designated as its leader. Following the meeting, the brochure entitled "The Road to the Kurdistan Revolution," prepared by Öcalan in collaboration with Hayri Durmuş, was accepted as the program of the entity that would later be named the PKK. This brochure was not published until 1978, primarily due to the high costs associated with newspaper and magazine publications at that time and the risk of apprehension by security forces. The fundamental aim of the organization was to develop a strategy for operating in the Southeastern Anatolia region, where the Kurdish population is concentrated. During this period, propaganda was disseminated in cities such as Diyarbakır, Şanlıurfa, Mardin, Batman, Gaziantep, Bingöl, Elâzığ, Kars, Tunceli, and Ağrı under the names of Nationalists and Kurdistan Revolutionaries. One year later, during several meetings organized on his tours, Abdullah Öcalan was presented as the leader to the organization's sympathizers, achieving the anticipated benefits and further consolidating its presence in the region. In 1978, the first congress of the PKK was convened in Lice, Diyarbakır, thereby formalizing the organization's status (Karaca, 2015). Initially active in Southeastern Anatolia, the organization gradually expanded its operations to various regions of Turkey, especially major cities. Through the numerous actions and initiatives, it organized, it has caused Turkey's strength and resources to be used in combating terrorism rather than being shifted to other areas.

In this study, beginning with the initial action carried out for the declaration of its establishment, the violence practices manifested in the PKK's domination strategy—employing violence as an effective tool in all its strategies—are examined. In this context, information on the concepts of terror and terrorism is provided, and a detailed discussion of historical terrorist organizations is presented.

2. CONCEPTS OF TERROR AND TERRORISM

2.1. Terror

The term "terror" derives from the Latin word "*terrere",* which carries the meanings of instilling fear and intimidation. However, its usage in a sense closely approximating its contemporary meaning first emerged in France following the French Revolution (Gökçe and Aksu, 2025; Gökçe and Aksu, 2020). Terror is defined as the condition of employing terrorist activities in an organized and continuous manner as a tool to change the status quo by illegal means for a political purpose (Bal, 2006). Terror is the act of utilizing methods of intimidation and wear, employing coercion or threat tactics to instill a set of ideas and behaviors (Yılmaz, 2011). It denotes terrorism in the sense of using violence in a planned and unlawful manner with the aim of inciting conflict and war among social classes for social, national, racial, religious, and other similar purposes (Gül, 2012).

According to Prof. Dr. Ümit Özdağ's definition, "Terror is not a series of irrational actions, but rather the entirety of the violent activities carried out within a logical sequence by a politically weaker

organization in order to impose its demands on a politically stronger organization. In this sense, terror can also be referred to as the totality of the methods employed by political-military movements in their pursuit of power. In summary, terror is the strategy of a politically weaker movement that, by excluding democratic solution methods and resorting to violence, targets the instillation of societal fear and despondency as well as the political and military defeat of its opponent" (Usta, 2003).

2.2. Terrorism

There is no consensus on the concept of terrorism. This is because the term terrorism is a complex and value-laden concept (Aksu and Dere, 2021). Terror and terrorism are concepts that are particularly expressed as being confused with one another. Any individual activity that arises in a targetless and involuntary manner is labeled as terror. Terrorism, on the other hand, is the organized and calculated use of these violent elements—referred to as a terror movement—to achieve political objectives. In this context, terror is an event, whereas terrorism is a phenomenon (Kasımoğlu, 2010). Terrorism can only be evaluated in terms of a country's internal affairs when it is directed exclusively at one country or region. However, in recent times, as terrorist groups have acquired economic, political, and psychological power, the fact that a terrorist organization can pose a threat to more than one country has endowed terrorism with an international dimension. In this respect, terrorism is considered in two categories: national and international.

2.3. Terrorism in the Historical Process

Although terror incidents occurred even before the French Revolution, it can be argued that the concept of terrorism emerged with the French Revolution. Terrorism, which has appeared in nearly every period throughout history, has led to individual or organizational acts of violence affecting countries or communities. It is a known fact that terrorism affects all of humanity directly or indirectly without any restrictions of time, space, age, or gender. The oldest known terrorist organization is the "Zealot" movement. The leader of the Zealots, a Jewish sect founded on religious principles, initiated an uprising against Roman rule by combining religious and nationalist elements. Another terrorist organisation is described as the Jewish 'Sicarii' sect, founded in Palestine and based on the Zealot tradition. Like the Zealot organisation, the Sicarii planned assassinations targeting Roman elites and were involved in countless acts of violence that caused fear and panic among the people. This organization is credited with carrying out the first recorded suicide attack in history. Its name derives from the sword called "sica," which its members concealed under their garments (Demirel, 2005). Another significant organization in human history is the one known as the "Hashshashins," established in the Middle East. This organization was founded a millennium after the Sicari, when Hasan Sabbah established it during the 11th to 13th centuries against, among others, the Seljuk vizier Nizam-ı Mülk, carrying out assassinations that resulted in the deaths of numerous statesmen. Hasan Sabbah, considered the founder of modern terrorism, extended terrorism over a long period and systematized it in order to achieve his objectives. The terrorist organization he established, with its secret organizational structure and systematic activities, later served as an example for subsequent terrorist organizations. It is reported that its members carried out assassination operations by drugging their targets (Demirel, 2005). Another well-known terrorist organization is the "Thugs." Active between the 600s and 1800s, this organization was founded on religious principles, with the aim of offering people as sacrifices to Kali, the goddess of destruction. In doing so, they eliminated many individuals living in rural areas, capturing their victims and strangling them with silk cords (Altuğ, 1995). When terrorism acquired a multidimensional character in the 18th century, various definitions of terrorism emerged. Terror, as presented during the period of 1793–1794 in France to describe a series of violent events, was expressed as the period of terror associated with the Jacobins. For Robespierre, who viewed terror not as a normal occurrence but as the product of an extraordinary situation, terror was explained as swift and severe justice. In the 19th century, leftist groups, particularly in Russia, began to play an influential role in terrorist incidents.

These leftist groups, which executed various violent actions aimed at dismantling the state and social institutions during this period, are considered the earliest examples of terrorism that continue to exist today. Moreover, nationalist and separatist political terrorism movements and struggles that emerged at the end of the 19th century and continued to develop into the 20th century, especially during the Cold War years, had a global impact. With the New World Order declared after the Cold War, united terrorism took on a different direction. In our era, technological advancements have significantly contributed to the transformation, evolution, and acceleration of terrorism. As a result, terrorism has now become a global threat, having expanded its scope from a simple attack system to the use of biological, nuclear, and chemical weapons (Uyar, 2008).

2.4. Types of Terrorism

There are many classifications of terrorism. However, fundamentally, terrorism is manifested as national (domestic) terrorism, international terrorism, state terrorism, state-sponsored international terrorism, ethnic terrorism, and cyber terrorism (Çağlar, 2009).

2.4.1. National (Domestic) Terrorism

All acts of violence carried out within the borders of a single state, without the involvement of non-state actors or the influence of a foreign state, are referred to as "National" or "Domestic" terrorism (Taşdemir, 2020).

2.4.2. State Terrorism

In state terrorism, which is ultimately classified as the crime of "genocide," the governing power implements terror practices against its own people through coercive policies such as arrests and killings, with the aim of safeguarding or advancing its political interests. Here, terror functions as a domestic policy intended to compel the public to accept the state's decisions. Regimes that have adopted state terrorism include Lenin and Stalin in the Soviet Union, Hitler in Germany, Mussolini in Italy, the Khmer Rouge under Pol Pot in Cambodia, Saddam Hussein in Iraq, and the Mao Zedong regime in China (Taşdemir, 2020).

2.4.3. State-Sponsored Terrorism

State-sponsored terror is defined as terrorism that arises when a state supports individuals or groups conducting terror actions against another state in order to achieve its own objectives (Arslan, 2019).

2.4.4. International Terrorism

International terrorism is defined as terrorist actions that, despite occurring within a state's own borders, violate the rights of other states or individuals belonging to other states and are carried out in an interconnected manner. In contrast to this type of terrorist act, there is also the situation where individuals from different nations are affected (Şimşek, 2016).

2.4.5. Transnational Terrorism

Unlike international terrorism, transnational terrorism is characterized by terrorist acts that are not managed by any state. Instead, these acts are directed by non-state actors (Taşdemir, 2020).

2.4.6. Ethnic Terrorism

Ethnic terrorism refers to the entirety of terror movements systematically carried out by a specific ethnic group with the aim of achieving independence and asserting its political existence. This

form of terrorism arises when minority groups, which adopt their own origin, culture, traditions, and customs as their primary benchmarks, believe that resorting to armed violence is their only option to achieve their objectives. They aim to render individuals belonging to the target ethnic group dependent on them through the adoption of common points of action.

2.4.7. Cyber Terrorism

Cyber terrorism is defined as the entirety of harmful actions carried out against states, individuals, or groups using computer programs, networks, and technology by those with specific political, social, psychological, or religious needs aiming to subjugate or intimidate a government or society (Şimşek, 2016). In this context, actions such as crashing official or civilian websites, obtaining confidential state information, disabling national banking systems, and accessing individuals' account information are executed.

2.5. Objectives of Terrorism

Terrorist organizations have multiple objectives according to the areas in which they operate. However, it can generally be stated that these organizations act either to instill their own political and ideological[*] ideas in their target audiences or to establish a new order in place of the existing authority (Arslan, 2019). In this context, some of the fundamental objectives are as follows.

2.5.1. Socio-Cultural Objectives

One of the primary objectives of terror is to disrupt the unity, integrity, and order of society. To achieve this, terror operates on the principle of exploiting the differences among individuals or groups who belong to various cultures, beliefs, lifestyles, and worldviews in order to create divisions, conflict, and an atmosphere of chaos (İlhan, 2008).

2.5.2. Economic Objectives

The allocation of vast resources by states for counter-terrorism efforts causes significant harm to the economies of economically weaker countries. This situation leads these nations to divert funds that could otherwise be spent on enhancing their welfare levels toward combating terrorism, thereby negatively affecting their development.

2.5.3. Political Objectives

The political aim of terror is to weaken, dismantle, and replace the existing system with a regime and administration that align with the organization's objectives.

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[*] The concept of ideology is generally used in two different senses. The first meaning is "partial ideology" and the other meaning is "holistic" ideology. If it is stated that the opposing side's main thoughts and ideas should not be believed, then what is meant here is partial ideology. Because here, thoughts and ideas deliberately and systematically cover up a truth that is not in the interests of the opposing side. In other words, partial ideology adopts only a portion of the opposing side's ideas and embraces them solely in terms of their content. The concept of holistic ideology, the second meaning, attempts to understand the opposing side's entire worldview by questioning and internalizing it, acting from a collective subject (Aksu, 2024: 17).

2.5.4. Psychological Objectives

The actions undertaken by terrorist groups are intended to eliminate the public's trust and loyalty toward the state through intimidation, demoralization, fear-mongering, and coercion. These violent measures generate an atmosphere of anxiety and fear within society, ultimately leading individuals who have lost confidence in the state to embrace the dominance of terrorist organizations and align themselves with them.

2.6. Causes of Terrorism

The causes of terrorism can be examined under four main headings: economic causes, social causes, political causes, and legal causes.

2.6.1. Economic Causes

Poor economic conditions within society adversely affect individuals both materially and spiritually. Individuals worn down in these ways contribute to the emergence of numerous societal problems and facilitate an environment in which terrorist organizations can easily propagate their messages. In this context, income distribution inequalities are among the most significant tools used by terrorist organizations in their propaganda efforts.

2.6.2. Social Causes

Social factors that reinforce and facilitate the spread of terrorism in society include a low level of education, the prevalence of religious, sectarian, and ethnic differences to an extent that they fragment society, and the existence of traditions that incite violence. Additionally, the ideological polarization of society and the failure to prioritize rights and freedoms as societal objectives are also among these factors.

2.6.3. Political Causes

Among the political causes of terrorism are factors such as the inability of the state regime to take root, its lack of acceptance by the populace, and the government's failure to establish authority. The activities of some groups that seek to exploit state authority for their own interests, coupled with a desire to revert to a previously implemented regime, can also be counted among the political causes. Moreover, significant ideological divergences among state institutions and the marked ideological differences between existing political parties are likewise included in these factors.

2.6.4. Legal Causes

Legal factors, which can be regarded as an overarching objective of all terrorism-related elements, are those that influence the emergence of terrorism. The dysfunction of a state's legal institutions, the inability of existing legal rules to keep pace with the times, and the partial application of these laws are all considered among the legal causes of terrorism. Additionally, the absence of a deterrent effect from legal regulations and penalties, coupled with a diminished societal belief in law and justice, also impacts terrorism.

3. TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS AND ACTIVITIES IN TURKEY

3.1. The Emergence of the Terror Phenomenon in Turkey

Just as terror and terrorism exist in every social and political structure in which they emerge, in Turkey as well, for the past 35 years, the separatist-minded terrorist organization PKK has been addressing both internal and primary security issues through an ethnically based terror framework. The

PKK terrorist organization, which emerged actively in 1984, poses a threat to our country's internal security. Its formation began in the period following the elimination of the Armenian terrorist organization ASALA (Özdağ, 2008). The organization's political and policy objective is to directly fragment the Republic of Turkey and to establish a so-called Kurdish state named Kurdistan. This separatist terrorist organization, which became active with this purpose and aims for success through its actions, is an armed propaganda organization. As an example of ethnic-based terrorist organizations, it employs arms as a tool of propaganda, using terror and politics as alternatives to each other, thereby aiming to have these ideas adopted by the public. When examining the brief history of terrorism in Turkey, it is evident that the terrorist organization ASALA has long been the country's most significant internal problem. Following the curtailment of ASALA's effectiveness during the 1980s, the PKK terrorist organization's initial terror activities emerged in the form of small-scale student incidents. It is observed that these incidents were fundamentally rooted in certain ideological conflicts, originating from events led by Marxist and Leninist ideologies (Aktaş, 2006). It is also known that the anarchic and terror incidents that increasingly occurred in Turkey from the state of emergency declared on December 26, 1978, until the military intervention on September 12, 1980, were underpinned by these Marxist and Leninist ideologies (Aktaş, 2006).

3.1.1. Objectives of the PKK Terror Organization

The primary objective of the PKK terrorist organization is to capture a geographic area, region, or stronghold and establish control over it, and then, through a series of disturbances and anarchic actions, to drive society into ethnic conflicts that eventually lead to a civil war.

It is well known that the primary and ultimate objective of the organization is the establishment of a so-called Kurdish state, "Independent Kurdistan" (Özdağ, 2008). In this regard, the new strategic methods and principles, developed and supported by the organization's leadership and foreign states, are as follows (Aktaş, 2006):

1. First, certain privileges must be acquired and cultural advantages obtained.

2. Then, the unitary structure must be transformed to create a new political formation.

3. Subsequently, it is understood that a "Greater Kurdistan" will be established within a triangle encompassing Turkey (the eastern and southeastern regions), Iran (northwest), and Syria (north).

4. TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS IN TURKEY

4.1. PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) Terror Organization

4.1.1. Kurdish Nationalist Organizations and Associations That Laid the Groundwork for the Formation of the PKK Terror Organization

When examining the history and current state of the Republic of Turkey, it is evident that separatist terror activities emerged even before the establishment of the state. It may be accurately observed that the Kurdish rebellions, which arose in the late period of the Ottoman Empire—stemming from internal demands such as establishing a separate state, exemption from taxes, and avoidance of military service—were linked to the incitements of states pursuing expansionist policies. When these Kurdish rebellions, attributed to such reasons, are examined, it is observed that there were 12 rebellions up to 1912, and 25 rebellions between 1924 and 1940 (Birand, 1992). Taking advantage of the privileges granted to minorities by the Armistice of Mudros, signed on October 30, 1918, the Kurds, led by Seyyid Abdulkadir along with the prominent figures, members of parliament, and certain regional governors of that period, formed associations under the names Kurdish Terakki Cemiyeti and Kurdish Teali Cemiyeti, primarily operating in Diyarbakır and its surrounding provinces (Demirel, 2011).

4.1.2. Turkey Kurdistan Democratic Party (TKDP)

The party, which has four main branches operating in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran, was established as the umbrella organization under the name Kurdistan Democratic Party. Initially founded on a right-wing political ideology, over time, as its membership profile changed, the party shifted its primary objective and set the goal of establishing an independent Kurdish state separate from Turkey (Töreli, 2002).

4.1.3. Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Centers (DDKO)

Although its members hold a revolutionary outlook, the Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Centers, which are more closely aligned with the ideology of Kurdish nationalism, were established in 1969 by a group that split from the Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP) due to ideological differences (İmset, 1993).

4.1.4. Revolutionary Democratic Cultural Associations (DDKD)

The organization, which aimed to unite all Kurds, including those in Iran, Iraq, and Syria, was founded in 1975 by former DDKO members who were either released due to the general amnesty of 1974 or acquitted due to a lack of evidence. It rapidly established a presence, particularly in universities (İmset, 1993).

4.1.5. Kurdistan Pioneering Workers' Party (PPKK)

The party, which was organized in the Southeastern Anatolia region, completed its structuring through legal means. It was established in 1983 by senior members of DDKO who were released under the 1974 general amnesty.

4.1.6. Kawa Organization

The organization, named after the legendary folk hero Kawa, was founded in 1976 by a group that split from DDKD. It holds the belief that the regions inhabited by the Kurdish people have been colonized by foreigners and that their liberation can only be achieved through armed struggle.

4.1.7. Rızgari (Kurdistan Liberation Party) and Ala Rızgari (Kurdistan Red Liberation Party)

The organization, which took its name from the magazine it published, was founded in 1977 by another group that split from DDKD. The majority of its members are based abroad, and the association is rooted in the pre-1980 Anti-Colonialist Cultural Associations (ASK-DER).

4.1.8. Kurdistan National Liberationists (KUK)

The Kurdistan National Liberation Organization, which conducts initiatives aimed at intellectuals and youth, has established a particularly effective organization in the border-adjacent areas of the Southeastern Anatolia Region. It was founded in 1978 by individuals who split from TKDP with the aim of establishing an independent socialist state in the region where they were active.

4.1.9. Bahoz

The Bahoz organization was founded in Sweden in 1970 under the leadership of Bedirhan Anter and Anter Anter. Its name, which means "storm" or "tornado," is also known as the Kurdistan Struggle Association.

4.1.10. Tekoşin (Kurdistan Struggle Organization)

The Kurdistan Struggle Organization, that is, Tekoşin, was formed in 1970 under the leadership of a segment of the Kurdish nationalist faction within THKP/C (Turkey People's Liberation Party/Front). With actions bearing a strong resemblance to those of THKP/C, this organization, renowned for its name through its armed activities, aimed to unite all Kurds under a single umbrella organization and to establish a Socialist Kurdish state (İmset, 1993).

4.2. The Establishment of the PKK Terror Organization

Following the termination by the Turkish state of the activities of the ASALA terrorist organization and other Armenian groups, external powers that supported terrorism found an alternative approach capable of shifting the arena of conflict to Turkey. Accordingly, the objective is to organize Turkey's significant Kurdish population under an organization with an ethnic-ideological foundation, thereby ensuring the continuation of terrorist activities.

In the early years of the young Republic of Turkey, established after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, European powers' efforts to extend their influence in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia through the Kurdish and Nasturi communities were connected to the historical and political dynamics that laid the groundwork for the emergence of the PKK terrorist organization after 1980. This situation is also closely related to those actors' strategies for perpetuating their past experiences and regional interests. As in the past, even today some international actors employ the same tactics and reintroduce the same plans (Pirim and Örtülü, 1999). The separatist organization, known by the short name PKK (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan), organized itself as a very small cadre movement by operating in a covert and cunning manner. Founded during a Nowruz period on 21 March 1973 near Ankara by Abdullah Öcalan and several of his friends, the organization established the ideological foundation of the separatist grouping within the first three years of its inception. During that period, it adopted the name "Kurdistan Revolutionaries" (Pirim and Örtülü, 1999). Beginning in early 1978, efforts to transform the organization into a formal party structure commenced, and on 27 November 1978, it held what it considered its first congress at Fis Village in the Lice district of Diyarbakır Province. As a result, the organizational name was changed from "Kurdistan Revolutionaries" to PKK, marking its official founding date as 27 November 1978. Until that year, the organization's propaganda in the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia Regions was known as "Apocular." It is important to note that the primary factor facilitating the organization's rapid development within such a short period was the prevailing national conditions. The temporal circumstances and the chaotic crisis environment in the region were the most significant reasons for its emergence. Moreover, one of the most crucial events contributing to the organization's sudden expansion was its deliberate use of certain ideological motives and ethnic discrimination as propaganda material to mobilize support. Considering the geographical area in which the organization expanded during the 1980s—characterized by poor transportation, a lack of facilities such as electricity and communications, and significant deficiencies in connectivity—it is evident that these adverse conditions, coupled with an environment conducive to the organization's interests, greatly contributed to its development. These and similar factors have been pivotal in the organizational development and strengthening phases of terrorist groups (Özdağ, 2008).

4.3. The Ideology and Strategy of the PKK Terror Organization

The formation of an organization's ideological structure is influenced by factors such as the political atmosphere at the time of its establishment, its geo-strategic position, prevailing intellectual currents, the conjunctural situation, and the political views and ideological foundation of its founding leader. In the case of the PKK terrorist organization, it is maintained that the ideology underlying its continuous development, organization, and group formation even before its formal establishment was Marxist-Leninist in nature. This ideology was particularly effective in shaping the emergence of the

"Kurdish Nationalism" movement by rapidly instilling the Kurdish concept and structure among the masses, taking advantage of the leniency in the provisions on mass movements found in the 1961 Constitution. The PKK developed based on the belief that, under the guidance of "Scientific Socialism," it could eliminate the feudal order and colonialism and establish an independent state by attracting the world's socialist forces solely through the aid of Marxist-Leninist ideology (İmset, 1993).

Based on Marxist-Leninist principles and with the objective of establishing an Independent Kurdistan State, the organization has developed a four-stage strategy consisting of: ensuring cultural and social rights and freedoms, establishing an autonomous or federative administration, creating a Northern Kurdistan State, and establishing an independent, united, and democratic Greater Kurdistan State. Believing that these main strategies can only be achieved through guerrilla operations, the organization is convinced that a prepared, planned, organized, and prolonged people's war is necessary. This process, rooted in guerrilla warfare and referred to in the literature as a "prolonged people's war," comprises three phases: "strategic defense," "strategic balance," and "strategic attack" (Özcan, 1999).

5. DOMINANCE STRATEGY AND OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

5.1. The Use of Violence in the Dominance Strategy of the PKK Terror Organization

Since its inception, the PKK terrorist organization has consistently incorporated violent actions in the strategies it has implemented over a period spanning more than thirty years. It is evident that the PKK consistently opts for armed actions as its method of struggle, developing a strategy aimed at imposing fear and violence on the local population in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia—areas where it seeks to establish its influence—in order to force the public to accept the prevailing situation. These violent actions serve to portray the organization as the sole power in the region through coercion, thereby compelling the populace to choose between the state and the organization. In this context, any ensuing societal rupture lays the foundation for the conflict environment that the PKK intends to establish in the region (Okumuş, 2015).

5.2. Actions Committed by the PKK Terrorist Organization

In line with its strategy of dominance, the violent actions executed by the PKK terrorist organization—which began with an attack on the residence of Şanlıurfa MP Mehmet Celal Bucak on 30 July 1979, aimed at publicizing its name—are examined within this framework. According to the Human Rights Association, a total of 25,805 individuals lost their lives due to terror-related violence between 1993 and 2011.

Table 1. İHD Casualties in Acts of Terrorist-Related Violence

Year	Deaths in Armed Conflict	Killings of Civilians	Deaths Caused by Landmines and Loose Explosives	Suspicious Soldier-Police Suicides
1993	3333	807	-	-
1994	5000	458	-	-
1995	3894	230	-	-
1996	2859	119	-	-
1997	2514	151	-	-
1998	1718	91	-	-
1999	857	138	-	-

2000	147	52	-	-
2001	92	30	-	-
2002	30	7	35	
2003	104	6	20	18
2004	240	28	59	18
2005	499	39	70	17
2006	345	82	40	21
2007	424	27	14	36
2008	432	22	28	24
2009	141	36	22	34
2010	244	51	5	47
2011	318	21	-	31
Total	22971	2295	293	246

Source: TBMM Araştırma Komisyonu, Terör Ve Şiddet Olayları Kapsamında Yaşam Hakkı İhlallerini İnceleme Raporu, 24. Dönem 3. Yasama Yılı.

5.2.1. Acts of Economic Violence

In addition to its strategy of establishing dominance in the region, the PKK began to engage in Turkey's political administration by carrying out operations aimed at inflicting economic distress on the country. It has pressured and extorted local businessmen involved in regional investments, leading to a reduction in investment activities. Moreover, the organization exploits every available economic opportunity, launching numerous attacks and acts of sabotage by damaging buildings, facilities, vehicles, and equipment belonging to public institutions, as well as citizens' property and livestock.

5.2.1.1. The Organization's Sources of Income

Since the early 1990s in Turkey, as the number of PKK actions increased, its financial resources diversified as well. With the organization garnering more international support and an increasing number of supporters every day, its relationships also began to vary. During its period of consolidation in Syria, the PKK initially set its sights on the Kurds in Georgia and especially those in Armenia. In Armenia, which has had its issues with Turkey, the PKK easily developed ties, sending its cadres there and beginning to recruit supporters among the Kurds. Recognizing that organization would be easier among the Kurds who migrated illegally to Armenia during the early years of our Republic, the PKK further expanded its influence by also affecting the Ezidis. One of the organization's most significant sources of income has been the profits derived from smuggling and drug trafficking.

5.2.2. Acts of Political Violence

The PKK terror organization has carried out various attacks during elections by subjugating the public, designating individuals to cast votes, and intimidating those who oppose them. In polling stations, officials were pressured to direct votes toward specific candidates and parties. Blank ballots were required to be submitted with the relevant party's seal, and those who resisted faced abduction, torture, and even death.

Table 2. Losses of Public Servants in the PKK's Violent Acts

Ministry/Institution	Number of Martyrs
TBMM* (Grand National Assembly of Türkiye)	3
PRIME MINISTRY**	20
MINISTRY OF JUSTICE***	9
MINISTRY OF FAMILY AND SOCIAL POLICIES	-
MINISTRY OF EUROPEAN UNION AFFAIRS	-
MINISTRY OF SCIENCE, INDUSTRY AND TECHNOLOGY	-
MINISTRY OF LABOR AND SOCIAL SECURITY****	-
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND URBANIZATION	5
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS	39
MINISTRY OF ECONOMY	-
MINISTRY OF ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES	22
MINISTRY OF YOUTH AND SPORTS	-
MINISTRY OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK	7
MINISTRY OF CUSTOMS AND TRADE	2
MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT, MARITIME AFFAIRS AND COMMUNICATIONS	36
MINISTRY OF DEVOLOPMENT	-
MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND TOURISM	-
MINISTRY OF FINANCE	5
MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION	155
MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE	-
MINISTRY OF FORESTRY AND WATER AFFAIRS	10
MINISTRY OF HEALTH*****	14
MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY AND TRADE	-
MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR******	5216
Police Department	594
Gendarmerie General Command	3105
Gkk	1509
Other	8
Total	5543

Source: TBMM Araştırma Komisyonu, Terör ve Şiddet Olayları Kapsamında Yaşam Hakkı İhlallerini İnceleme Raporu, 24. Dönem 3. Yasama Yılı.

5.3. Other Acts of Violence

5.3.1. Village and Hamlet Raids

On August 15, 1984, an armed and bombed attack was carried out on a Gendarmerie station building in the district of Eruh in Siirt Province, resulting in the martyrdom of one gendarme and injuries to 3 civilians and 9 others. Two days later, on August 17, the PKK targeted the Şemdinli Military Barracks, the Şemdinli District Gendarmerie Command, and the Military Bazaar, causing injuries to one non-commissioned officer and one private.

When the dates indicate November 8, 1984, the organization once again carried out bomb attacks on two houses in the Eruh district of Siirt Province, killing 5 women and 2 children. On December 15, 1984, the terrorist organization attacked the Sığırlı Mezra of Erkent Village, affiliated with the Pervari district of Siirt, resulting in the deaths of 3 civilians.

On January 22, 1987, in Ortabağ Village of the Uludere district in Şırnak Province, during a wedding at a residence, a bomb attack carried out by PKK terrorists resulted in the deaths of eight civilians, including two children and four women. The massacre, which also injured 15 individuals— three of whom were village guards—was widely reported in the press. The following day, in Başyurt (Zaxuran) Village, located in the Midyat district of Mardin Province, a crackdown by the organization in the Efeler (Gündükörte) area led to the killing of 10 people, including seven children (two of whom were infants) and one woman.

5.3.2. Attacks on Police Stations and Security Forces

On October 25, 1995, attacks were carried out on three Gendarmerie outposts near the Midyat district in Mardin Province, resulting in the martyrdom of 17 soldiers, and following the incident, cross-border operations were initiated ("Sınır ötesi operasyonlar 1983'te başladı", 2018). On May 15, 1992, during a raid on the Şırnak Uludere Taşdelen Gendarmerie outpost by a large group of approximately 600 individuals, 27 soldiers were martyred and 40 PKK militants were found dead. On June 3, 1992, the PKK terrorist organization set an ambush in the Kupik Tepe area of Karageçit Village in Şırnak; however, security forces detected the situation early, and the operation did not succeed. As a result, 5 terrorists were killed and 1 was captured alive. On August 30, 1992, a group of PKK terrorists who managed to infiltrate Turkey from Iran attacked the Hakkâri Alan Gendarmerie outpost. In the ensuing clash, 43 PKK members were killed, while during a cross-border operation by the Turkish Armed Forces, over one hundred PKK militants were captured dead ("Sınır ötesi operasyonlar 1983'te başladı", 2018).

5.3.3. Road Blocking Acts

On June 11, 1992, in the Tatvan district of Bitlis Province, 13 individuals in a minibus, stopped by a group of PKK members, were lined up and executed by gunfire (Toktaş, 2018). On October 20, 1992, near Hazarşah Village in the Solhan district of Bingöl, 13 passengers of a bus that had been intercepted by PKK militants were lined up and shot, with 6 additional individuals injured. On December 7, 1992, an ambush on a minibus in Mardin resulted in 4 fatalities and 12 injuries. On May 24, 1993, PKK militants halted a bus carrying soldiers on the Elazığ-Bingöl highway, abducted 36 unarmed Turkish soldiers, lined them up, and shot them, leaving 33 soldiers martyred (Aydın, 2012).

On October 13, 2012, along the 25th kilometer of the Tunceli-Erzincan Pülümür highway, during a clash with a terrorist group that had blocked the road, a police officer killed one terrorist and injured another (Tosunoğlu, 2012). In Batman, on May 25, 1995, a PKK militant attempting to plant a bomb at a minibus stop—where a passenger had been dropped off—had a bomb detonate in his possession, causing the death of the militant along with seven other people, and injuring 20 individuals.

On August 13, 1996, in Sivas Kangal, an attack on the Demiriz Train Station at Akçaşehir Village by a group of nine PKK members, including two women, resulted in the death of eight Turkish State Railways employees. Four days later, on August 17, 1996, near the Eğriçimen Plateau in the Koyulhisar District, PKK militants who had blocked the road fired upon four vehicles, leading to the death of four civilians and injuring seven others. On August 22, 1996, a group of PKK militants attacked village guards on duty in Şemdinli by launching rockets near the Örencik Mezra, resulting in the deaths of three village guards and five other individuals. On November 8, 1996, in Köprülü Village of the Çukurca District in Hakkâri Province, PKK militants carried out a rocket-propelled attack on a minibus, causing the death of 12 village guards and 17 others, with eight individuals injured. On the same day, operations by security forces in various Southeastern provinces led to the discovery of 22 deceased PKK terrorists. Finally, on December 15, 1997, a minibus traveling toward the district in Mardin Province's Dargeçit district collided with a mine laid by the PKK near Yoncalı Village, resulting in 12 deaths and 12 injuries.

6. CONCLUSION

An examination of the actions carried out by the PKK terrorist organization reveals that it invariably employs armed operations, using violence intensely as its mode of struggle. Since its first action—marking the announcement of its establishment—the organization has executed numerous armed and bomb attacks, considering violence as its most powerful argument in its strategy of dominance and acting accordingly. In this context, a review of these operations indicates that, particularly during its early years, the organization frequently targeted villages and rural settlements with raids aimed at subjugating and instilling fear among the civilian population. Simultaneously, with the same objective in mind, it conducted raids on homes belonging to individuals and tribes in districts and urban centers who were not supporters of the organization, seeking to consolidate its dominance. The village and rural raids during this period were characterized by the nature of massacres, causing the loss of many civilian lives regardless of age or gender.

It can be argued that the reason behind the massacres carried out by the PKK terrorist organization during this period was that, although its initial action was directed against state authority, the local population sided with the state, thereby preventing the organization from achieving its desired impact. In this context, the PKK has executed numerous massacres of civilians both to instill fear and demoralize the public, and to create the impression that the state is incapable of protecting its citizens, thereby drawing them to its side (Yayman, 2011). In fact, some of these massacres were even intended to be portrayed as having been carried out by the security forces of the Republic of Turkey in order to garner support. Careful investigations—as well as evidence published in the Turkish-language Serxebun Magazine, which is favorable to the PKK—have demonstrated that these operations were carried out by the organization itself and not by state forces. It has been stated that these violent actions aimed to create an atmosphere of fear, generate distrust, and increase anti-authority sentiment (Cantenar and Tümlü, 2016). In addition to village raids targeting civilians and attacks on tribes that did not support it, the organization also conducted assaults against state officials, public institutions, schools, and construction sites in a similar manner, with the purpose of creating the impression that the state is incapable of protecting its personnel and institutions, thereby asserting its dominance through violence. Over time, the increasing targeting of teachers is indicative of the PKK's keen analysis of the vulnerabilities of the local population. Since it is easier to recruit those deprived of education into the organization, teachers and schools became targeted; in this regard, during a raid on a hamlet in Lice, Diyarbakır on May 21, 1987, a village teacher and a village imam were martyred. In another raid on June 25, 1995, in Silvan, an incident occurred in which villagers, who were praying in a mosque, were forced out and lined up to be shot, indicating that the PKK's attacks on religious officials and places of worship were an effort to undermine the strength of religious unity.

An examination of the number of operations during this period reveals that, in addition to village raids, the PKK terrorist organization also targeted numerous gendarmerie posts and official buildings, demonstrating its effort to establish sole dominance in the region. In addition, during the 1988 assassination attempt on the former Diyarbakır Prison commandant, the operation featured the display of the bodies of two ex-convicts as a form of salute to the commandant, with the aim of propagating the idea that the state was rendered powerless against the organization. Likewise, when considering the roadblock incidents—said to be carried out for identification purposes—the practice of lining up individuals opposed to the PKK, whether they were soldiers or official personnel, and subjecting them to gunfire can be interpreted as a similar demonstration of strength. This is an important example that underscores the significance of violence in the PKK's strategy of dominance. On May 24, 1993, on the Elazığ–Bingöl highway, during an operation to block a moving military vehicle, 36 military personnel (all civilians and unarmed) were forced out and lined up, resulting in the martyrdom of 33 soldiers— again illustrating the PKK's use of violence as a display of power. After its initial action, the PKK increased its massacres against the civilian population with the dual aims of gaining acceptance from the local people and establishing its dominance. Although the organization initially sought to secure a specific geographical area in the region, it gradually shifted its operations to other areas. In many regions of Turkey, the PKK initially focused on armed attacks; however, in later operations, it placed greater emphasis on the use of bombs and mines. In particular, attacks executed by detonating previously laid mines during the passage of military vehicles constitute the earliest instances of explosive-based terrorist operations. Occasionally, attacks on healthcare teams were also carried out by luring officials into mine-infested areas with false alerts in the form of ambushes. The PKK further escalated these violent actions into a deliberate show of bodies. In a study conducted by CANTENAR and TÜMLÜ in 2016, which examined 1,724 operations carried out by the PKK between 1993 and 2012 and listed the types of operations most frequently used, it was found that the most common operations were those carried out by ambush and mine. This finding can be interpreted as the PKK's attempt to demonstrate its strength by achieving successes through unconventional warfare that it could not secure via direct combat. The third most frequent type of attack was harassment, which can also be seen as an effort to showcase strength through violence. In addition, the numbers of kidnappings and sabotage operations were quite high. Through these actions, the PKK sometimes aimed to intimidate, while at other times it sought to generate material revenue through ransom and extortion. Moreover, another purpose of these operations—similar to that of roadblocks, village raids, and assaults on gendarmerie posts—was to show that the PKK's power was unstoppable and that the state was incapable of protecting its citizens. In conclusion, it is evident that the PKK terrorist organization attempts to draw the public to its side and incite the people against the state by using various ideological elements and employing coercion and violence.

Although it is well known that the Turkish Armed Forces have achieved success over the past 35 years predominantly through manpower-based operations, in today's environment of rapidly evolving technology, terrorist targets detected by armed unmanned aerial vehicles (SİHA and İHA) are being neutralized by jets of the Turkish Air Force. This approach enables highly effective and successful operations without incurring any personnel casualties, and these operations must continue unabated. Our country should steadfastly pursue its political and armed struggle, elevate the economic level of the local population, and implement educational programs to raise awareness among the people. Such measures would help prevent the exploitation of societal values through the Kurdish propaganda propagated by terrorist organizations. The populace must be assured that the state stands by them with all its institutions, safeguarding their lives and property, and that it remains at their side in the face of any danger or terrorist incident.

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ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Halk Eğitimi Merkezi Yöneticilerinin Karşılaştığı Yönetimsel Sorunlar ve Çözüm Önerileri
Administrative Problems and Solutions Encountered by Public Education Center Managers

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Özet

Bu çalışma, halk eğitimi merkezlerinin karşılaştığı yönetimsel sorunları ve çözüm önerilerini incelemektedir. Halk eğitimi; bireylerin mesleki, genel ve okuma-yazma gibi temel eğitim ihtiyaçlarını karşılayan yaygın eğitim faaliyetleridir. Ancak merkezler, kurs planlamasında yaşanan aksaklıklar, fiziki mekân eksiklikleri, usta öğretici yetersizlikleri ve kursiyer devamsızlığı gibi çeşitli zorluklarla karşılaşmaktadır. Literatür taraması yöntemiyle yapılan analizde, e-Yaygın sistemindeki teknik problemler, kırsal bölgelerde yeterli kursiyer bulunamaması, bağımsız hizmet binalarının yetersizliği ve engelli bireylere uygun mekân eksikliği gibi temel sorunlar belirlenmiştir. Ayrıca, usta öğreticilerin mesleki yeterlilik ve iş güvencesi sorunları ile kursiyerlerin yalnızca belge almak için kurslara katılması da önemli yönetimsel problemler arasındadır. Çözüm önerileri arasında; e-Yaygın sisteminin iyileştirilmesi, merkezlere bağımsız binalar kazandırılması, usta öğreticilere yönelik hizmet içi eğitimlerin artırılması ve kursiyer motivasyonunu yükseltecek uygulamaların geliştirilmesi yer almaktadır. Bu çalışma, halk eğitimi merkezlerinin yönetimsel sorunlarını bütüncül bir bakış açısıyla değerlendirmektedir.
Anahtar Kelimeler: **Halk Eğitimi Merkezleri , Yönetimsel Sorunlar, e-Yaygın Sistemi.**

Abstract

This study examines the administrative problems faced by public education centers and proposes potential solutions. Public education consists of non-formal educational activities that aim to meet individuals basic educational needs in areas such as vocational training, general education and literacy. However, these centers encounter various challenges, including issues in course planning, lack of physical facilities, insufficient qualifications of master trainers and irregular attendance of trainees. Through a literature review, the inability to find enough participants in rural areas, the inadequacy of independent service buildings and the lack of accessibility for individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, the insufficient professional qualifications and job security of master trainers, as well as trainees attending courses merely to receive certificates, are also highlighted the e-Yaygın system, providing independent and well-equipped buildings for the centers, increasing in-service training opportunities for master trainers and developing strategies to enhance trainee motivation. This Study provides a comprehensive evalution of the administrative challenges faced by public education centers.
Keywords: **Public Education Centers , Administrative Problems, e-Yaygın Sytem..**

1. INTRODUCTION

Public education covers all activities carried out within the scope of non-formal education in order to meet the educational needs of individuals who have never entered the formal education system or who have been excluded from formal education in areas such as vocational, general and literacy (Geray, 2002: 53; Güler, 2004: 4). According to the Regulation on Non-Formal Education Institutions of the Ministry of National Education, public education is lifelong education and training activities that support the economic, social and cultural development of individuals (MEB, 2006:12).

In our country, public education centers generally organize programs for adult individuals and contribute to their social and psychological development as well as increasing their knowledge and skills. The courses offered in these centers support the personal development of individuals and aim to increase the participation of women in economic and social life (Duman, 2007:18). In this context, the effectiveness of public education centers largely depends on the smooth functioning of management processes. However, when the studies in the literature are examined, it is seen that the administrators working in public education centers face various administrative problems. The most important of these problems are disruptions in the process of planning courses, inadequacy of physical spaces, lack of communication with master trainers, and difficulties in meeting the demands of trainees (Selçuk, 2017:34; Dolanbay, 2014:22). In particular, physical infrastructure deficiencies and the lack of independent service buildings stand out as the main factors that prevent these institutions from providing effective services.

In this context, the main purpose of the research is to address the managerial problems faced by public education center managers in Türkiye. In addition, it is to analyze specific areas such as course planning processes, physical infrastructure deficiencies, master instructor assignment processes and relations with trainees and to develop concrete solutions for these problems. Within the scope of the research, answers to the following questions will be sought:

What are the main challenges faced by public education center managers in the course planning process?

What are the effects of physical infrastructure deficiencies on the education quality of public education centers?

What are the problems experienced in the process of assigning master trainers?

What are the reasons for high rates of absenteeism among trainees?

What managerial measures can be taken to solve these problems?

This study will bring together the findings obtained from field research in the light of the existing information in the literature and offer solutions for improving the management processes of public education centers.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Public education, as a part of non-formal education, is the activities that aim to meet the educational needs of individuals outside formal education in areas such as vocational, general and literacy (Geray, 2002:53; Güler, 2004:4). According to the Regulation on Non-Formal Education Institutions of the Ministry of National Education, public education includes "lifelong education and training activities that support the economic, social and cultural development of individuals." (MEB, 2006:12)

Public Education Centers are institutions that offer free courses in literacy, vocational-technical and general fields to individuals of all age groups from seven to seventy. These centers aim to contribute

to individuals' social and psychological development as well as their acquisition of knowledge and skills. They also serve social goals such as increasing women's participation in economic and social life (Duman, 2007:18). The main function of Public Education Centers is to support social development by organizing programs suitable for the interests and needs of individuals. The objectives of Public Education Centers include ensuring that individuals acquire vocational skills, increasing literacy rates, adapting to technological developments and strengthening social cohesion (MEB, 2020:5). In addition, these centers also undertake the task of developing programs in line with local needs while supporting individuals to acquire habits of living together.

Before the republican regime, public education was mostly limited to traditional methods. Madrasas, akhism organizations and guilds were the basic building blocks of public education in this period. With the Declaration of the Republic Regime, public education gained a more systematic structure. The 1928 literacy mobilization and the Foundation of the People's House were important steps in this process (Okçabol, 1996:146). Village institutes contributed to the spread of public education by training teachers in rural areas (Nazlı & Özer, 2021:1422).

Today, public education centers operate under the authority of the General Directorate of Lifelong Learning. These centers diversify their educational services by developing programs according to the needs of local communities. They also aim to reach a wider audience by offering education on digital platforms (Selçuk, 2017:34). Public Education Centers operate under the Ministry of National Education and are active in every province and district of our country. They aim to contribute to individuals' lifelong learning and meet their educational needs. Through the courses offered at Public Education Centers, individuals receive education in many areas such as literacy, vocational skill development, and cultural and artistic enrichment. These institutions are important not only for personal development but also for social integration, employment, and cultural cohesion. The duties of Public Education Centers include planning courses, assigning and training instructors for the courses, collaborating with institutions, and ensuring the participation of target groups (such as disadvantaged individuals, illiterate individuals, and those with poor socio-economic status) in these educational programs.

The effective management of Public Education Centers (PECs) is of critical importance in terms of the quality of learning opportunities offered to individuals outside of formal education. PEC administrators are not merely individuals who carry out administrative tasks; they are also leaders who represent the institution, carry out strategic planning, and coordinate learning processes. In this context, administrators fulfill both their duties based on regulations and play a guiding role in the organizational development processes.

In the study conducted by Yazıcı (2022), the roles of Public Education Center administrators are evaluated as follows: "When assessed in terms of the learning organization discipline, administrators are to some extent effective in areas such as systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, and team learning." However, the same study also emphasizes that "there are deficiencies in decision-making and collaboration processes." This indicates that administrators face certain limitations in practicing some fundamental leadership skills.

In the context of internal institutional leadership, Yazıcı (2022) describes the roles of administrators as "effective in teaching and designing roles, but more passive in the role of serving." This evaluation indicates that administrators' leadership styles are more focused on directing and planning, while their participatory and supportive aspects have room for improvement.

Similarly, Yılmaz (2010) states that Public Education Center administrators "possess transformational leadership qualities," highlighting that they stand out in areas such as "vision-setting, inspiring others, and innovation." These qualities contribute not only to managing the current state of the institution but also to shaping its future direction.

In another study on the main challenges faced by administrators, Nazlı and Özer (2021) highlight issues such as "planning, inadequate physical infrastructure, lack of qualified instructors, and time management." It is stated that these problems complicate administrators' decision-making processes and negatively affect the overall efficiency of the institution.

All these findings reveal that Public Education Center administrators should not only act as implementers but also take on the roles of policy-makers, communicators, and change managers. Therefore, in order to be effective leaders, administrators need to be supported in areas such as "shared decision-making, technology integration, employee motivation, and the development of institutional culture" (Tanır, 2006).

The management processes of Public Education Centers cover critical areas such as course planning, physical infrastructure management and the assignment of master trainers. The effective execution of these processes directly affects the service quality of the centers. However, factors such as lack of physical space, insufficient personnel and digital infrastructure problems cause various difficulties in these processes (Dolanbay, 2014:22). Finally, public education centers stand out as important institutions that not only provide individuals with knowledge and skills but also support social development. In order to increase the effectiveness of these centers, it can be said that developing solutions for administrative problems is important for the effectiveness of Public Education Centers.

3. ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS FACED BY PUBLIC EDUCATION CENTER MANAGERS

Public Education Center managers face various problems in the course planning process. These problems arise from factors such as lack of technological infrastructure, insufficient staff, inability to analyze local needs correctly, and technical problems arising from the e-Yaygın system (Nazlı & Özer, 2021:1422). The course planning process includes stages such as determining courses according to the demands of the public, appointing master trainers and creating course calendars. However, the problems encountered in this process can negatively affect the effectiveness of the courses and reaching the target audience.

In recent years, the e-Yaygın system has made course application and planning processes more systematic in public education centers. However, technical problems in this system bring additional workload to administrators. For example, the content of course programs is not clear enough and systemic errors in master instructor applications are among the common problems (MEB, 2024:15). In addition, bureaucratic processes such as the need for additional commission approval during the management of off-calendar applications increase the workload of administrators (Gürün HEM, 2024).

There are also various difficulties in finding and assigning master trainers. The opening of courses may be delayed due to the insufficient education level of master instructors and the fact that some applications are made with incorrect or incomplete documents (Selçuk, 2017:12). In addition, errors in the scoring system of master instructors and applications of unsuitable candidates bring additional burden to administrators (Nazlı & Özer, 2021:1423).

Accurate analysis of local needs is also critical in course planning. However, in some public education centers, these analyses are not carried out effectively enough. When courses cannot be organized in accordance with the demands of the public, problems such as trainees' lack of interest and low participation rates arise (Balcı et al., 2024:42). It can be said that these problems prevent public education centers from achieving their goals.

In the process of creating the course calendar, managers should be careful to avoid overlaps with requests from different time periods. However, some courses cannot be offered due to the minimum

participation requirement of 12 people (Selçuk, 2017:14). This creates dissatisfaction for both managers and trainees.

Public Education Centers face various problems related to the physical conditions of service buildings and course locations while conducting non-formal education activities. These problems negatively affect the effectiveness and efficiency of public education centers and reduce the quality of educational services provided to the society. When the literature is examined, the following studies on the subject show that most of the public education centers do not have independent service buildings and that the existing buildings are generally inadequate (Balcı et al., 2024:36). Due to the inadequacy of service buildings, public education centers are forced to operate in other public buildings or temporary spaces. This situation makes it difficult for institutions to create their own identities and negatively affects the sustainability of educational activities (Nazlı and Özer, 2021:1423).

Existing buildings generally do not have sufficient number of classrooms and workshops. The inadequacy of the tools and technical equipment required for the opening of courses is also an important problem (Selçuk, 2017:14). Especially in rural areas, difficult access to course locations and difficulties in supervising these areas increase the workload of administrators (Balcı et al., 2024:42). In addition, the fact that service buildings are not suitable for the access of people with disabilities draws attention as an important deficiency. This situation, which restricts the access of disabled individuals to courses, reduces the inclusiveness of public education centers and prevents disadvantaged groups from benefiting from education (Nazlı and Özer, 2021:1424).

The inadequacy of the tools and equipment used in public education centers is also a noteworthy problem. The lack of materials used in courses limits the learning process at the theoretical level and reduces the efficiency of applied training (Nazlı & Özer, 2021:1423). Due to these deficiencies, the learning experiences of the trainees are negatively affected and it becomes difficult for the courses to achieve the intended goals.

Master trainers working in Public Education Centers have an important role in carrying out non-formal education activities. However, various problems related to the educational level and professional competencies of master trainers can negatively affect the effectiveness of these centers. Studies reveal that a large number of master trainers do not have sufficient education level and the quality of courses decreases due to their lack of professional knowledge (Nazlı and Özer, 2021:1422; Balcı et al. 2024:36).

The lack of clarity in the criteria used in the appointment of master instructors and the uncertainties in the legislation is one of the main problems experienced in this process. In current practices, it is stated that due to the lack of clear criteria for the appointment of master instructors, in some cases, people who do not have sufficient qualifications can be appointed to these positions (Nazlı and Özer, 2021:1423). In addition, it has been stated that most of the master instructors do not have sufficient knowledge on pedagogical formation or adult education (Selçuk, 2017:14).

Another important problem related to master trainers is the lack of continuity of employment. Master trainers working without tenure are usually employed seasonally, which has negative effects on both job security and motivation (Balcı et al., 2024:42). This structure, which does not ensure continuity, can also disrupt the training processes of trainees. In addition, problems such as lack of materials and administrative support that master trainers face at the course sites also make their work difficult. Failure to provide materials suitable for the demands of the trainees and communication problems with administrators reduce the efficiency of the courses (Nazlı and Özer, 2021:1424). In addition, problems such as increased competition among master trainers and the inability to distribute the workload fairly are also frequently mentioned (Balcı et al., 2024:37).

Problems related to trainees in Public Education Centers are among the important factors that negatively affect the effectiveness of non-formal education activities. The most important of these

problems is the absenteeism problems of the trainees. Most of the trainees do not attend the courses regularly and this situation makes it difficult for the courses to achieve the targeted learning outcomes. Especially due to the nature of adult education, absenteeism rates are quite high as trainees are not under strict supervision as in formal education (Ayanoğlu et al., 2023:34).

The demands of trainees pose another challenge for managers. Trainees often request courses to be offered when and where they want, but it is not possible to meet these demands due to the minimum participation requirement of 12 people. Especially in rural areas, this requirement is even more difficult to meet (Ayanoğlu et al., 2023:36). In addition, it has been reported that some trainees attend courses with the sole purpose of receiving a certificate and are absent after receiving the certificate. This situation negatively affects both the regular functioning of the courses and the motivation of other participants.

Competition among trainees is another problem in public education centers. Especially in vocational and technical courses, competition between trainees working in the same sector can create unrest in the training environment (Ayanoğlu et al., 2023:37). In addition, the fact that some trainees attend courses only for the purpose of creating a social environment can reduce the efficiency of the training. Finally, problems related to the supervision and transportation of course locations are also among the problems experienced with trainees. It is stated that the difficult access to the course locations outside the central building and the problems experienced in the supervision of these areas reduce the satisfaction of both administrators and trainees (Ayanoğlu et al., 2023:38).

In order to solve these problems, it is suggested that the minimum participation requirement should be relaxed and lower participation requirements should be applied in rural areas. In addition, in order to reduce absenteeism rates, motivational activities should be organized for trainees and strategies should be developed to increase their commitment to the training process.

Administrators of Public Education Centers (PECs) face various challenges in the course planning process. These issues stem particularly from factors such as the lack of technological infrastructure, insufficient staff, inadequate analysis of local needs, and technical problems associated with the e-Yaygin system (Nazli & Ozer, 2021:1422). The course planning process includes several stages such as identifying courses based on public demand, assigning master trainers, and preparing course schedules. However, the problems encountered during this process can negatively affect the effectiveness of the courses and their reach to the target audience.

In recent years, the e-Yaygin system has made course application and planning procedures more systematic within Public Education Centers. However, the technical issues within the system have placed an additional workload on administrators. For example, the unclear structure of course content and system-related errors during master trainer applications are among the frequently reported problems (MoNE, 2024:15). Additionally, bureaucratic processes such as the requirement for extra commission approval for off-calendar applications increase the administrators' workload (Gurun PEC, 2024).

Various challenges are also encountered in the process of finding and assigning master trainers. Delays in course initiation may occur due to insufficient educational backgrounds of master trainers and applications submitted with incorrect or incomplete documentation (Selcuk, 2017:12). Furthermore, errors in the master trainer evaluation system and applications from unqualified candidates add to the administrative burden (Nazli & Ozer, 2021:1423).

Accurate analysis of local needs is also critically important in course planning. However, in some PECs, such analyses are not conducted effectively. When courses are not aligned with public demand, problems such as a lack of interest and low participation arise (Balci et al., 2024:42). This situation can hinder the PECs from achieving their intended goals.

In the international literature, similar findings have been noted. Smith and colleagues (2019) emphasized that technological infrastructure deficiencies present significant barriers to educational planning processes and increase the burden on administrators (Smith, Brown & Taylor, 2019).

When creating course calendars, administrators must be careful to avoid scheduling conflicts resulting from requests received at different times. However, the requirement of a minimum of 12 participants to open a course often renders some courses unfeasible (Selcuk, 2017:14). This leads to dissatisfaction among both administrators and trainees.

To address these challenges, it is recommended to increase the number of administrative staff at PECs, improve the technical aspects of the e-Yaygin system, and conduct more effective local needs analyses. Additionally, regular in-service training programs should be organized to enhance the qualifications of master trainers, and assignment processes should be made more transparent.

Johnson and Lee (2021) have pointed out that the insufficient analysis of local needs lowers the success of non-formal education programs, particularly having more serious consequences in rural areas. Participatory planning methods are recommended as a solution to this issue (Johnson & Lee, 2021).

Public Education Centers face various issues regarding the physical conditions of service buildings and course venues during the implementation of non-formal education activities. These problems negatively impact the effectiveness and efficiency of PECs, thereby lowering the quality of educational services provided to the public. Research shows that a large number of PECs do not have independent service buildings and that existing buildings are generally inadequate (Balci, Saytas & Altun-Dinc, 2024:36). Due to insufficient facilities, PECs are often forced to operate in other public buildings or temporary locations. This situation makes it difficult for institutions to establish their own identity and adversely affects the sustainability of educational activities (Nazli & Ozer, 2021:1423).

It has been noted that current buildings generally lack an adequate number of classrooms and workshops. The lack of tools, materials, and technical equipment required to open courses is also a significant issue (Selcuk, 2017:14). Especially in rural areas, difficult access to course venues and challenges in monitoring these areas increase the workload of administrators (Balci et al., 2024:42). Moreover, the inaccessibility of service buildings for individuals with disabilities is a major shortcoming. This situation limits access to courses for people with disabilities, reducing the inclusiveness of PECs and hindering disadvantaged groups from benefiting from education (Nazli & Ozer, 2021:1424).

The insufficiency of materials used in PECs is another notable issue. The lack of course materials limits the learning process at a theoretical level and reduces the effectiveness of practical training (Nazli & Ozer, 2021:1423). As a result, trainees' learning experiences are negatively affected, making it difficult for the courses to achieve their intended goals.

Master trainers working at PECs play a crucial role in the execution of non-formal education activities. However, various problems regarding the educational background and professional qualifications of these trainers can adversely affect the effectiveness of these centers. Studies show that most master trainers do not have a sufficient level of education, and due to a lack of professional knowledge, the quality of courses declines (Nazli & Ozer, 2021:1422; Balci et al., 2024:36).

One of the fundamental issues in assigning master trainers is the lack of clear criteria and ambiguities in regulations. It has been noted that, in some cases, individuals who do not meet the required qualifications are appointed due to the lack of transparent criteria in the current practices (Nazli & Ozer, 2021:1423). Moreover, many master trainers lack pedagogical formation or sufficient knowledge in adult education (Selcuk, 2017:14).

Martinez and Silva (2020) emphasized that supporting the professional development of master trainers significantly improves the quality of education and participant satisfaction. They stress the need for regular in-service training and clear assignment criteria (Martinez & Silva, 2020).

Another important issue concerning master trainers is the lack of continuity in employment. Since most of them work without a permanent position, they are usually employed on a seasonal basis, which negatively impacts job security and motivation (Balci et al., 2024:42). This lack of continuity can also disrupt trainees' educational processes. Additionally, problems such as inadequate materials at course venues and a lack of administrative support complicate the work of master trainers. The inability to provide materials in line with trainees' demands and communication problems with administrators reduce the efficiency of courses (Nazli & Ozer, 2021:1424). Furthermore, increasing competition among master trainers and the unequal distribution of workload are also frequently mentioned problems (Balci et al., 2024:37).

To address these issues, it is recommended that regular in-service training programs be implemented to support the professional development of master trainers. Moreover, legal regulations should be introduced to make assignment criteria clear and transparent. Improving the personal rights of master trainers and ensuring employment continuity will also help solve these problems.

Problems related to trainees in PECs are among the major factors negatively affecting the effectiveness of non-formal education activities. One of the most common problems is absenteeism. A significant number of trainees do not attend courses regularly, which hinders the achievement of intended learning outcomes. Due to the nature of adult education, trainees are not under strict supervision as in formal education, which results in high absenteeism rates (Ayanoglu, Gunerhan Sadik, Sadik & Erbas, 2023:34).

Trainees' demands pose another challenge for administrators. Trainees often request that courses be opened at their preferred time and location, but meeting these demands is difficult due to the minimum participation requirement of 12 people. This is especially challenging in rural areas (Ayanoglu et al., 2023:36). Additionally, it has been noted that some trainees participate in courses solely to obtain certificates and become absent once they receive them. This negatively affects both the regular operation of courses and the motivation of other participants.

Competition among trainees is another problem observed in PECs. In vocational and technical courses, competition among trainees working in the same sector can lead to discomfort in the educational environment (Ayanoglu et al., 2023:37). Moreover, some trainees join courses solely to expand their social circle, which can reduce the efficiency of education. Finally, problems related to the supervision and accessibility of course venues are also among the issues concerning trainees. Difficulty in accessing off-site course locations and challenges in monitoring these areas reduce satisfaction among both administrators and trainees (Ayanoglu et al., 2023:38).

When the literature studies on the problems faced by Public Education Center administrators are examined, it is seen that the problems are generally grouped under similar headings. These problems are listed as insufficient physical and financial resources, lack of personnel, course planning and organization problems, communication problems with master trainers and trainees, digital infrastructure deficiencies and lack of cooperation with local administrations.

Ayas et al. (2007) draw attention to the problems encountered in the course planning and organization phase. The problems encountered in the planning of courses are generally due to the individual demands of the trainees and attendance problems. For better planning, it is suggested that the number of trainees should be reduced and the courses should be made more flexible.

Toktaş and Serençelik (2007) focus on the communication problems of public education center administrators with master instructors and trainees. The education level of master instructors and their

lack of knowledge of the legislation cause various problems between administrators and master instructors. In order to solve this problem, it is stated that the education level of master instructors should be increased and in-service trainings should be provided regularly.

Dolanbay (2014) emphasizes that one of the most important problems of public education centers is the lack of physical infrastructure. Many public education centers serve in buildings that do not belong to them and this situation reduces the quality of education of the institutions. In addition, the lack of tools and equipment also negatively affects the educational activities of the centers. Dolanbay suggests that in order to solve these problems, independent buildings belonging to the institutions should be provided and sufficient budget should be allocated.

Selçuk (2017) states that another important problem faced by administrators is the lack of personnel. Especially the insufficient number of administrative staff increases the workload of the existing staff and reduces the quality of service. In order to solve this problem, it is stated that a sufficient number of qualified personnel should be employed.

Nazlı & Özer (2021), in their study on the problems faced by public education center administrators and their solution suggestions, stated that administrators have difficulties due to frequent legislative changes. In addition, problems such as lack of cooperation with local governments and low level of interest of the society in public education centers were discussed.

Yapar and Şentürk (2022), in their study on the problems experienced by women trainees in public education centers, emphasized that especially women trainees could not participate regularly in courses due to transportation, child care and economic constraints. In order to solve these problems, it was suggested to increase transportation opportunities and provide childcare services with the support of local governments.

Demir and Karaca (2021), in their study on digital transformation and technology use in public education centers, stated that public education centers have difficulty in managing distance education processes due to their lack of technological infrastructure. In order to solve this problem, it was stated that the digital infrastructure should be strengthened and the staff should receive training on the use of technology.

Peker et al. (2021) examined the reasons for participation and satisfaction perceptions of trainees in the courses organized in public education centers. The research conducted in the case of Erzin district deals with the motivation of the trainees and their evaluations of the course processes. The findings show that trainees participate in courses for reasons such as acquiring vocational skills, socialization, personal development and increasing their employment opportunities. It was also found that trainees were generally satisfied with the course content and training processes, but there were some areas in need of improvement. The research reveals that course programs should be organized in accordance with the needs of the trainees in order to increase the effectiveness of public education centers.

Gürsoy (2022) addressed the problems faced by public education center directors in a local context in his study on the case of Erzurum Province. In the study, problems such as physical infrastructure deficiencies, budget insufficiency and lack of cooperation with local governments came to the fore. It was stated that managers should be authorized and local resources should be used more effectively to solve these problems.

Peker et al. (2023) examined the effectiveness of public education center programs in Türkiye in terms of developing human capital and combating poverty. The study, conducted in Antalya, Muğla, Van and Hatay provinces, evaluates the role of public education centers in providing individuals with vocational skills, increasing employment opportunities and ensuring social mobility. Findings show that public education programs are effective at varying levels depending on regional differences and offer

important opportunities especially for disadvantaged groups. The study offers several recommendations for improving public education policies and making programs more efficient.

In the MEB (2024), Nevşehir Strategic Plan, targets were set for the development of non-formal education activities in public education centers. In the research, issues such as lack of participation of individuals in need of special education, promotion problems and access problems were discussed. As a solution, it was suggested that promotional activities should be increased and access facilities should be provided. Finally, studies in the literature offer suggestions such as building independent service buildings, providing sufficient budget, increasing the number of staff, making course planning more flexible, increasing the education level of master trainers, strengthening cooperation with local governments, improving digital infrastructure and increasing promotional activities to solve the problems faced by public education center managers.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

When the literature studies on the problems faced by Public Education Center administrators are examined, it is seen that the problems are generally grouped under similar headings. These problems are listed as insufficient physical and financial resources, lack of personnel, course planning and organization problems, communication problems with master trainers and trainees, digital infrastructure deficiencies and lack of cooperation with local administrations.

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Toktaş and Serençelik (2007) focus on the communication problems of public education center administrators with master instructors and trainees. The education level of master instructors and their lack of knowledge of the legislation cause various problems between administrators and master instructors. In order to solve this problem, it is stated that the education level of master instructors should be increased and in-service trainings should be provided regularly.

Dolanbay (2014) emphasizes that one of the most important problems of public education centers is the lack of physical infrastructure. Many public education centers serve in buildings that do not belong to them and this situation reduces the quality of education of the institutions. In addition, the lack of tools and equipment also negatively affects the educational activities of the centers. Dolanbay suggests that in order to solve these problems, independent buildings belonging to the institutions should be provided and sufficient budget should be allocated.

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Gürsoy (2022) addressed the problems faced by public education center directors in a local context in his study on the case of Erzurum Province. In the study, problems such as physical infrastructure deficiencies, budget insufficiency and lack of cooperation with local governments came to the fore. It was stated that managers should be authorized and local resources should be used more effectively to solve these problems.

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In the MEB (2024), Nevşehir Strategic Plan, targets were set for the development of non-formal education activities in public education centers. In the research, issues such as lack of participation of individuals in need of special education, promotion problems and access problems were discussed. As a solution, it was suggested that promotional activities should be increased and access facilities should be provided. Finally, studies in the literature offer suggestions such as building independent service buildings, providing sufficient budget, increasing the number of staff, making course planning more flexible, increasing the education level of master trainers, strengthening cooperation with local governments, improving digital infrastructure and increasing promotional activities to solve the problems faced by public education center managers.

5. METHOD

In this study, literature review and content analysis methods were used to examine the administrative problems of public education centers and the solution suggestions for these problems. The literature review method is an approach that aims to create a theoretical framework by systematically analyzing the existing knowledge on a specific research topic. The sources used in the study were obtained from academic databases such as Dergipark, YÖK Thesis Center and Google Scholar. The keywords used in the search included "public education centers", "administrative problems", "non-formal education", "master instructor problems" and "trainee problems". When document review was conducted on this subject, a total of 45 academic sources were examined and 28 of them were found suitable for the scope of the study and included in the analysis.

The collected data were evaluated by content analysis method. Content analysis is a qualitative research method that allows data to be grouped under themes and these themes to be interpreted. In this

study, content analysis was conducted under four main themes: course planning problems, physical space deficiencies, problems with master trainers and problems with trainees. During the coding process, the findings in the literature were systematically analyzed and the results showing parallelism under each theme were brought together. During the coding process, both explicit (manifest) and implicit (latent) contents were taken into consideration; the consistency between the coding was calculated as 90% by cross-checking by an independent researcher. The relationships between the themes were evaluated and the findings were interpreted by comparing them with other studies in the literature.

Thanks to these methods, the main problems encountered in the administrative processes of public education centers were systematically analyzed and solutions were developed for these problems. The scientific reliability of the study was enhanced by clearly stating the selection criteria of the sources used in the literature review and explaining the content analysis step by step.

6. FINDINGS

In this study, the administrative problems of public education centers are examined under four main headings: course planning problems, physical space deficiencies, master instructor qualification problems and problems related to trainees. It is seen that these problems are handled similarly in the literature and are in parallel with the studies conducted.

There are various difficulties in the process of course planning in public education centers. The inability to organize courses in accordance with the individual demands of trainees, technical problems in the e-Laygın system, and the inability to meet the minimum participation requirement of 12 people in rural areas negatively affect this process (Ayanoğlu et al., 2023:36). In addition, insufficient analysis of local needs in the creation of course calendars leads to trainees' lack of interest and low participation rates (Selçuk, 2017:14). In order to solve these problems, more flexible planning and relaxation of participation requirements in rural areas are recommended (Ayas et al., 2007).

The fact that most of the public education centers do not have independent service buildings causes these institutions to operate in other public buildings or temporary spaces. This situation negatively affects the sustainability of educational activities (Nazlı and Özer, 2021:1423). Problems such as the fact that existing buildings generally do not have sufficient number of classrooms and workshops, lack of equipment, and are not suitable for access by disabled individuals also increase physical space inadequacies (Balcı et al., 2024:36). Dolanbay's (2014) study is in line with these results and states that independent buildings should be provided and sufficient budget should be allocated.

The lack of professional qualifications of master trainers and uncertainties in their appointment processes stand out as an important problem. Lack of job security and seasonal employment of master trainers, who work without tenure, lead to loss of motivation (Selçuk, 2017:12). In addition, lack of pedagogical formation and insufficient knowledge about adult education also reduce the quality of courses (Toktaş & Serençelik, 2007). In order to solve these problems, regular in-service training programs should be implemented and the process of assigning master instructors should be made transparent.

The high absenteeism rates of the trainees and their participation in the courses only to obtain documents negatively affect the regular functioning of the courses (Ayanoğlu et al., 2023:34). Especially in rural areas, transportation difficulties and economic context increase absenteeism rates (Yapar and Şentürk, 2022:35). It was also stated that female trainees cannot attend courses regularly due to their responsibilities such as childcare. It is recommended to provide transportation support and childcare services to solve these problems.

These findings comprehensively reveal the main administrative problems faced by public education centers. In this analysis, which is in line with other studies in the literature, solution

suggestions such as providing independent service buildings (Dolanbay, 2014), supporting the professional development of master trainers (Toktaş & Serençelik, 2007) and making flexible planning for the demands of trainees (Ayas et al., 2007) come to the fore.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the problems encountered in the administrative processes of public education centers and suggested solutions to these problems. The findings reveal that public education centers face serious challenges in four main areas: course planning, physical space deficiencies, master instructor qualification problems, and problems with trainees. These problems directly affect the effectiveness of public education centers and the quality of educational services they provide to the society.

In order to solve these problems, it is recommended that the number of administrative staff of public education centers be increased, technical deficiencies of the e-Yaygın system be eliminated and local needs analyses be conducted more effectively. In addition, regular in-service training programs should be organized to improve the qualifications of master trainers and the appointment process should be made more transparent. It is also recommended that regular in-service training programs to support the professional development of master trainers be implemented to solve these problems. In addition, the criteria for the appointment of master instructors should be made clearer and more transparent through legislative amendments. Improving the personal rights of master instructors and ensuring the continuity of their work will also contribute to the solution of these problems.

It was observed that the difficulties experienced in the course planning process arose due to the minimum participation requirement, especially in rural areas, and technical difficulties in the e-Yaygın system. This makes it difficult to create training programs in line with the demands of trainees. Physical space deficiencies are manifested in problems such as the lack of independent buildings for public education centers, inadequacy of existing buildings, and lack of accessibility for people with disabilities. The lack of professional qualifications and job security of master trainers is also an important factor that reduces the efficiency of courses. In addition, problems such as high absenteeism rates of trainees and the fact that they attend courses only for the purpose of obtaining a certificate negatively affect the training processes.

This study contributes to the literature in the following ways: A systematic framework is presented by bringing together the findings in the existing literature on the administrative problems of public education centers. In addition to the findings that are in line with the studies in the literature, concrete suggestions such as flexible planning in rural areas, supporting the professional development of master trainers and developing strategies to increase the motivation of trainees are presented. For example, the physical space deficiencies emphasized by Dolanbay (2014) were addressed in more detail in this study, and the importance of arrangements for the access of disabled individuals was especially emphasized. The need for professional development of master trainers, as expressed by Toktaş and Serençelik (2007), was evaluated in a broader context in this study and increased job security was suggested. Finally, a comprehensive approach is needed to improve the administrative processes of public education centers. In this context, steps such as providing independent service buildings, strengthening digital infrastructure, implementing regular in-service training programs for master trainers, and flexible planning in rural areas are of great importance. These recommendations will both enable public education centers to provide more effective services and contribute to social development.

These results are in line with the studies in the literature. For example, Dolanbay (2014) emphasized the need to eliminate physical space deficiencies; Toktaş and Serençelik (2007) emphasized the importance of supporting the professional development of master trainers. The study by Ayanoğlu et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of flexible planning in rural areas.

The solution to the administrative problems faced by public education centers is critical to ensure that these institutions provide more effective and efficient services. In order to solve course planning problems, the technical infrastructure of the e-Yaygın system needs to be strengthened. Elimination of systemic problems will make course application and planning processes more efficient. It is also recommended to relax the minimum participation requirement in rural areas and allow courses to be opened with fewer participants. Conducting more comprehensive local needs analyses will contribute to the organization of courses in line with the demands of the public. In order to overcome physical space deficiencies, public education centers should be provided with independent service buildings, and existing buildings should be made accessible to persons with disabilities. Elimination of technical equipment deficiencies and diversification of training materials will also improve the quality of training activities.

Regular in-service training programs should be implemented to solve the problems related to master teachers and the lack of pedagogical formation should be eliminated. The criteria for assigning master instructors should be clarified and transparency should be ensured in this process. Increasing the job security of master instructors working without staff and ensuring continuity will both increase motivation and contribute positively to the quality of education. In order to solve problems related to trainees, motivational activities should be organized to reduce absenteeism rates, and support mechanisms should be established to meet the needs of trainees. Especially for female trainees, transportation support should be provided and childcare services should be offered. In order to accelerate digital transformation processes, the technological infrastructure of public education centers should be modernized and staff should be trained in the use of technology. Finally, it is recommended that public education centers develop projects to strengthen cooperation with local governments. With the support of local governments, transportation, promotion and physical infrastructure problems can be solved. Promotional activities should be expanded to increase public awareness of public education centers and their role in social development should be emphasized. These recommendations will not only solve the current problems of public education centers, but will also help them become more inclusive and innovative.

It is recommended that more comprehensive research be conducted to solve the administrative problems faced by public education centers. In particular, studies can be conducted on strategies for developing cooperation models with local governments, accelerating digital transformation processes and increasing the role of public education centers in society. In addition, special projects should be developed to address problems such as transportation and childcare experienced by female trainees in public education centers. In order to improve the administrative processes of public education centers, it is of great importance to implement applied projects supported by field research. Such projects can contribute to social development by enabling public education centers to provide more effective services.

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ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ | RESEARCH ARTICLE

LIBOR Kavramı ve Çok Katmanlı Algılayıcı (Multi-Layer Perceptron) ile LIBOR'un Tahmin Edilmesi
LIBOR Concept and LIBOR's Estimation with Multi-Layer Perceptron

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Özet

LIBOR'dan yeni referans faiz oranlarına geçiş, finansal modelleme için önemli zorluklar sunmaktadır. LIBOR Piyasa Modeli (LMM) standart bir yaklaşım olsa da, karmaşıklığı ve kalibrasyon sorunları pratik uygulamasını kısıtlarken; geleneksel ekonometrik modeller ise faiz oranlarının doğrusal olmayan dinamiklerini yakalamakta genellikle yetersiz kalmaktadır. Bu çalışma, bu metodolojik boşluğu doldurmak amacıyla, bir yapay zeka tekniği olan Çok Katmanlı Algılayıcı (MLP) kullanarak, bir aylık ABD Doları LIBOR'unu ABD Merkez Bankası (FED) politika faizini temel bağımsız değişken olarak alarak modellemektedir. Öncel bir eşbütünleşme analizi, iki değişken arasında güçlü bir uzun dönemli ilişkiyi teyit etmiş ancak temel istatistiksel varsayımları (normal dağılım, otokorelasyon) ihlal etmiştir. Buna karşılık, MLP modeli olağanüstü bir tahmin performansı ($R^2=0,99$) sergilemiş ve LIBOR ile FED faizi arasındaki birebire yakın hareketi, bu varsayım ihlalleri olmaksızın güçlü bir şekilde yakalamıştır. Bulgular, parametrik olmayan ve yapay zekâ temelli yöntemlerin finansal tahminlemedeki etkinliğinin altını çizmektedir. Çalışmanın temel çıkarımı, FED politika faizinin doğru tahmin edilmesinin, LIBOR ve onun ardılı olan referans faiz oranlarının davranışını öngörmek için kritik öneme sahip olduğudur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Londra Bankalararası Teklif Oranı (LIBOR), LIBOR Piyasa Modeli (LMM), Çok Katmanlı Algılayıcı (MLP).

Abstract

The transition from LIBOR to new benchmark rates presents significant challenges for financial modeling. While the LIBOR Market Model (LMM) has been a standard approach, its practical application is limited by its complexity and calibration issues; meanwhile, traditional econometric models are often insufficient to capture the non-linear dynamics of interest rates. This study addresses this methodological gap by employing a Multi-Layer Perceptron (MLP), an artificial intelligence technique, to model the one-month U.S. Dollar LIBOR using the U.S. Federal Reserve (FED) policy rate as the primary independent variable. A preliminary cointegration analysis confirmed a strong long-run relationship between the two variables but violated key statistical assumptions (i.e., normality, autocorrelation). In contrast, the MLP model demonstrated exceptional predictive performance ($R^2=0,99$) and robustly captured the near one-to-one movement between LIBOR and the FED rate without these assumption violations. The findings underscore the efficacy of non-parametric, AI-driven methods in financial forecasting. The central implication of this study is that the accurate estimation of the FED policy rate is of critical importance for predicting the behavior of LIBOR and its successor benchmark rates.

Keywords: The London Inter-Bank Offered Rate (LIBOR), LIBOR Market Model (LMM), Multi-Layer Perceptron (MLP).

1. INTRODUCTION

Developed countries have experienced many contractions and subsequent expansions after World War II, such as the oil crisis in the 1970s, the dot-com crisis in the late 1990s, the financial crisis in 2008, and the pandemic in 2020. During and after these crises, there have been very serious volatilities in economic values. The reflection of these volatilities on interest rates has also been quite large. Figure 1 shows the monthly values of long-term interest rates (30-year US mortgage rates) and variable interest rates (1-month US Dollar LIBOR rates) covering the years September 1989 to April 2023.

Figure-1: LIBOR (1 Month) and Mortgage (30 Years) Interest Rates (1989-2023)
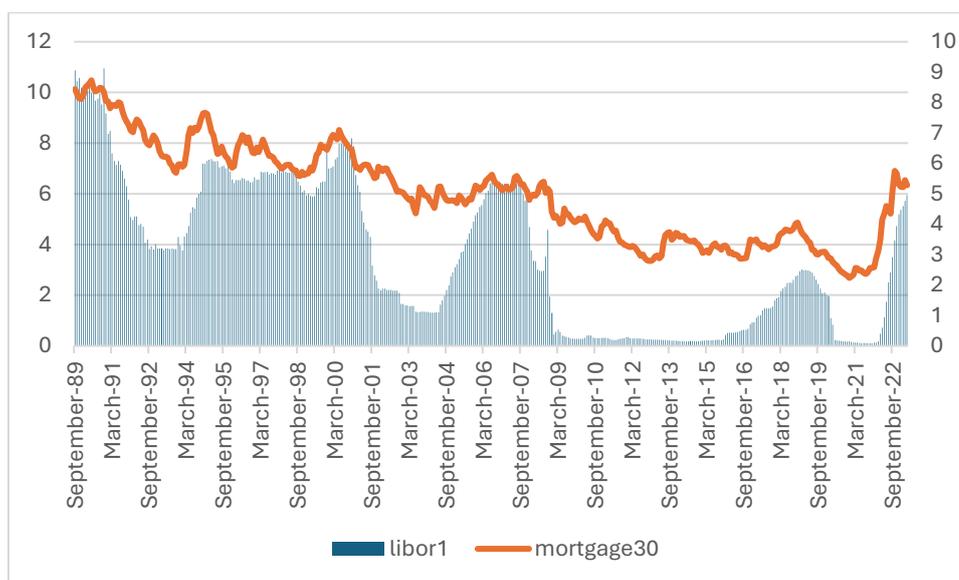
Source: St.Louis Fed. (2024) and global-rates.com (2024)

The 30-year mortgage loan interest rate, which was 10.13% in 1989, decreased to 2.91% in January 2021 and increased to 6.39% in December 2022. The arithmetic mean of the 30-year mortgage interest for the specified period is 5.99 and its standard deviation is 1.93. The arithmetic mean of the 1-month US LIBOR rate, which is one of the basic indicators of variable interest, is 2.94 and its standard deviation is 2.45. Although the average of the 1-month US LIBOR rate is relatively lower than the mortgage loan interest rate, its standard deviation is high. The correlation coefficient of both variables is 88%, which is quite high.

This change in interest rates has a significant impact on the entire world, including developed countries. While the interest payments of the US government were 515 billion USD in April 2020, they increased to 874 billion USD in 2023 in parallel with the increases in interest rates. The sharp increases in US interest rates also affect emerging markets and developing economies. The borrowing costs and debt burdens of these countries have increased, financing debt repayments has become difficult, their financial markets have deteriorated, capital inflows have decreased, and tensions have occurred in financial markets (Arteta et al., 2022). When Figure 2 is examined, the amount of interest payments related to the US government and the share of interest payments in GNP are seen. It is seen that a similar increase in the quantity and proportion of interest payments, which started after the oil crisis in the 1970s and continued with the "Volcker Deflation", has been repeated after the pandemic. It is estimated that the increase in interest payments will continue in the coming years and that by 2034 the ratio of interest payments to GNP will reach a record level of 3.9% (Congressional Budget Office, 2024).

Figure-2: Quantitative (billion USD) and Ratio (% GDP) Amounts of US Government Interest Payments (1947-2023)
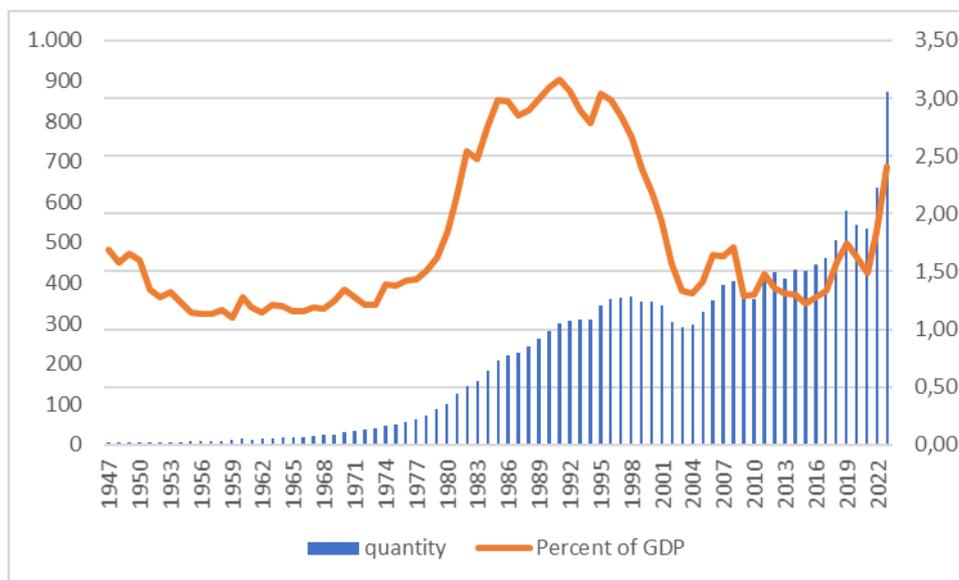
Source: St.Louis Fed. (2024)

For borrowers, long-term financing enables faster growth, greater shared prosperity, easier coping with life-cycle challenges, and lasting stability; reduces rollover risks (extending investment horizons and improving performance); and increases the availability of long-term financial instruments (The World Bank, 2015). In debt relationships, risk is shared between borrowers and lenders. In long-term financing, the risk is borne by the funders (having to endure fluctuations in the probability of default and losses in the event of default, and other changing conditions in financial markets such as interest rate volatility), whereas in short-term financing, the risk is borne by the borrowers (being forced to refinance their debts repeatedly) (Martinez Peria & Schmukler, 2017).

In international markets, the most important structure regarding the variable interest rate process has been the use of LIBOR rates. For many years, the LIBOR rate has been a part of financial markets as a reference value in both international debt agreements and derivative markets. Due to the 2008 financial crisis and the various speculations and manipulations that occurred afterwards, SOFR, developed by the New York Fed instead of LIBOR in the USA, began to be used on April 18, 2018. In parallel with the developments, the EU has put into operation the ESTR, the UK the SONIA, Japan the TONAR and Switzerland the SARON values. LIBOR rates continue to be created synthetically with the help of SOFR today.

One of the mathematical models widely used for pricing financial derivative products and risk management is the LMM, which is a time series model and is defined by a series of Stochastic Differential Equations (SDE). LMM is used in many areas such as understanding the movements of interest rates in financial markets, pricing derivative products and using them in risk management. Theoretical information about interest is used as the basis of studies on LMM. Monte Carlo simulation, which is used to model the future behavior of complex financial instruments and market variables, allows the solution of LMM. However, Monte Carlo simulation is quite difficult to use due to reasons such as being quite time consuming, having errors and fluctuations in its results, and the interdependence of prices and interest rates in financial markets. For these reasons, instead of determining LIBOR interest rates, LMM is used to model the movements of these interest rates and other financial variables over

time and to analyze the effects of these movements on the pricing of financial products and risk management. In order to obtain the future value of LIBOR value more quickly and precisely, the use of analytical or numerical solutions offers better solutions. By utilizing artificial intelligence and machine learning techniques to estimate the possible future values of LIBOR, financial modeling using the factors affecting LIBOR rates can be done more easily and more accurately.

The purpose of this study is to model LIBOR, which has a very important place in our daily lives. Since the data of SOFR used today started on April 18, 2018, the LIBOR value will be used in modeling the variable interest. In the modeling, instead of the LMM method, the artificial intelligence application Multi-Layer Perceptron (MLP) will be used due to the reasons stated above.

In this article, first of all, the historical process regarding the formation of LIBOR rates will be revealed. Then, scientific studies regarding the determination and modeling of LIBOR rates will be emphasized. After the empirical methods to be used are summarized, LIBOR rates will be modeled with an empirical study.

2. LITERATURE BACKGROUND

2.1. Historical Process of Establishing Libor Rates

LIBOR emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s to facilitate syndicated loan transactions and increase the transparency of their pricing. Following the growth in the credit market and new financial instruments (especially derivatives) that required reliable interest rate benchmarks, the British Bankers Association (BBA) assumed control of the LIBOR rate in 1986 (Intercontinental Exchange, 2018). Over time, the benchmark increased to 10 currencies with 15 maturities, and began to lose its effectiveness in 2012 as part of investigations opened due to manipulations in 2008.

In Figure 3 created by Kiff (2012), the differences between the three-month Eurodollar deposit rate and the three-month New York Funding Rate (NYFR) for the 3-month USD LIBOR rate in 2008 and 2009 are shown. It can be seen that the USD LIBOR rate was significantly lower than the NYFR after the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers in September 2008.

Figure -3: Comparison of 3-month USD LIBOR and NYFR Rates in 2008 and 2009

Source: Kiff (2012)

In the face of these developments, the Alternative Reference Rates Committee (ARRC) was established by the US to create a new benchmark covering large-volume and wide-ranging financial products and contracts in the global financial system, and the commission held its first meeting in December 2014 (ARRC, 2019). In 2017, ARRC developed SOFR, an interest rate based on overnight

repo transactions, using data collected by the Federal Reserve Bank in cooperation with the Financial Research Office of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, and it began to be used in 2018 (ARRC, 2017). Cairns (FCA) began to calculate LIBOR synthetically based on SOFR as of April 3, 2022 (FCA, 2023).

According to the forecast made by ARRC in 2018, it was estimated that the share of LIBOR USD in total transactions due to contracts would continue to increase until 2025 and would experience a rapid decrease in the following years (ARRC, 2018).

As a result of the gradual phasing out of the use of LIBOR rates; Forward Rate Agreements (FRAs) have largely become obsolete due to the reduction of pegging risk, swap transactions referencing "Nearly Risk-Free" Rates (RFR) have increased, the share of the UK and US in global turnover has decreased, while the share of the Eurozone has increased, and new tools have emerged to manage transitional basis risks in the post-LIBOR world (Huang & Todorov, 2022).

2.2. Theoretical Studies On the Determination Of LIBOR Rate

The first study on modeling the change of financial asset prices over time using random fluctuations was made by Bachelier in 1900 using ABM. Bachelier's study led to the use of random walks, understanding market dynamics, developing risk management strategies and popularizing statistical tools and mathematical techniques for modeling price fluctuations using mathematical modeling in financial markets. The current mathematical representation and solution of ABM was made by Ito and is shown in Equation (1) (Jarrow and Protter, 2003).

$$dX_t = \mu dt + \sigma dW_t \tag{1}$$

In equation (1); X_t is the asset price at time t, μ is the drift coefficient of the process, σ is the volatility coefficient of the process, dt is the time interval in the process and dW_t is a stochastic component and represents Brownian Motion.

Samuelson (1965) emphasized that Bachelier's work was not in accordance with the basic assumptions of finance because of the negative consequences that could arise. Samuelson eliminated this drawback with Geometric (or Economic) Brownian Motion (GBM). Samuelson's mathematical representation of interest rate movements is presented in Equation (2) (Samuelson, 1965).

$$dX_t = \mu(X_t)dt + \sigma(X_t)dW_t \tag{2}$$

In ABM, price change is represented by μ and σ, while in GBM, in the interest rate movement, the price of the dependent variable is used in addition to μ and σ. Therefore, the GBM movement provides a more accurate representation of the percentage price change with the growth of the process over time and eliminates the negative price problem that may occur in the ABM movement by preserving positive prices. While there is a normal distribution in ABM due to the use of only the Wiener process, the distribution of X_t in GBM is log-normal depending on time (Peters and Adamou, 2018). This means that the results of ABM are symmetrical, while the results in GBM have an asymmetric distribution and the probability of excessive increases is higher.

The Black-Scholes (BS) option pricing model, based on the GBM assumption, has inspired the development of more complex configurations of derivative products and new financial instruments by providing a better understanding of the distribution of prices and volatility. As can be understood from Equation (3), it is based on the assumption that the stock price S changes stochastically using GBM and that the value of the futures market after time t should be equal to the risk-free interest rate (Hull, 2012). In the BS option pricing model, equation (3) is found by solving it using the Ito's lemma method.

$$\frac{\delta f}{\delta t} + rS\frac{\delta f}{\delta s} + \frac{1}{2}\sigma^2 S^2 \frac{\delta^2 f}{\delta s^2} = rf \tag{3}$$

Merton (1973) reduced the assumptions of the BS Model, allowed the use of concrete variables in the final formula and the pricing of all options. With Merton's contributions, the model was named BSM. The BSM model allowed for issues such as calculating the net present value of invisible assets such as copyrights, estimating the value of companies according to the value and volatility of their assets, and modeling issues such as risk and insurance premium. (Wang et al., 2023)

Studies on modeling interest rates have a long historical development process. This development process has accelerated today due to reasons such as developments in communication, integration process experienced in the world, complexity and increasing needs in financial markets. There are two basic approaches to modeling interest rates: equilibrium and non-arbitrage. In equilibrium models, it is assumed that the market is in a state of equilibrium because financial market participants act with rational expectations by taking into account issues such as macroeconomic factors and long-term trends. Vasicek and CIR models are pioneering studies of equilibrium models. The important disadvantage of these time-homogeneous models is that they normally give a series of theoretical prices for bonds that do not exactly match the real prices we observe in the market. In order to overcome this drawback, models consistent with market prices were made using the assumption that there are no arbitrage opportunities. Ho & Lee (1986) developed some non-homogeneous Markov models for short-term interest rates.

Vasicek's model, which predicts the mean-reversion evolution of the long-term equilibrium distribution of short-term interest rates, is often considered a very good starting point because it is very suitable for both analytical evaluations and realistic modeling of problems (Jackel, 2001). Vasicek has done pioneering work using stochastic differential equations similar to Equation (1) with the help of a single-factor short-term model for modeling and forecasting interest rates. It has become an important tool for interest rate risk management, bond portfolio optimization and bond price forecasting because it contributes to understanding and forecasting the movement of interest rates over time and to improving risk management.

$$dr_t = \alpha\big(b - (r_t)\big)dt + \sigma dW_t \tag{4}$$

In the Vasicek model shown in Equation (4); r_t represents the interest rate at time t, α represents the return rate and b represents the long-term equilibrium interest rate. The Vasicek model has had a significant impact on the evolution and development of interest rate models in the financial literature.

Ho-Lee presented the first non-arbitrage model of interest rates in 1986, which exists in both discrete-time and continuous-time versions. It has a wide range of applications in mathematical finance, including bond pricing, option pricing, and future interest rate modeling (Izgi & Bakkaloglu 2017). The Ho-Lee model, which assumes that the spot rate process is normally distributed, is in Equation (5).

$$dr_t = \theta(t)dt + \sigma dW_t \tag{5}$$

In equation (5), σ is the volatility of the short interest rate and $\theta(t)$ is created from the initial period as seen in Equation (6) (West, 2010).

$$\theta(t) = \int{}'(0,t) + \sigma^2 t \tag{6}$$

However, Vasicek and similar models (such as Hull & White), which have a short-term model, can give accurate results in cases where there are random fluctuations in interest rates in short-term periods, the correlation between interest rates is low and volatility does not change over time. These deficiencies led to the emergence of the LIBOR Market Model (LMM). The model was created by Brace, Gatarek and Musiela (1997), Jamshidian (1997) and Miltersen, Sandmann and Sondermann (1997) based on the work of Heath-Jarrow-Morton (1992). In the created model, more realistic results were obtained by using the forward term instead of the short-term rate. The mathematical representation of the LMM is presented in equation (7) (Haugh, 2010).

$$dL_n(t) = \mu_n(t)L_n(t)dt + L_n(t)\sigma_n(t)^T dW_t \qquad (7)$$

The large differences in interest rates and their changes over time have led to the need to use Girsanov Theorem in the Wiener process. In the BS option pricing model, the use of risk-neutral measurement and the change of risk factors are based on the basic concepts of Girsanov Theorem. According to Girsanov theorem, the Wiener process is developed as $dW_t^Q = \theta_t dt + dW_t$ (Nekrasov, 2013). The drift of equation (4) is obtained again using Girsanov theorem and presented in Equation (8). Studies on LMM continue with models such as Diffision and Heston. (Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, 2021)

$$dL_n(t) = \mu_n(t)L_n(t)dt + L_n(t)\sigma_n(t)dW_n^{(n)}(t) \qquad (8)$$

In the studies presented so far, the parameters related to the function have been tried to be estimated by assuming that the interest rates have a functional form. These studies, which we call parametric models, require a more specific hypothesis. In non-parametric models, data-based models that do not adhere to a specific functional form structure are preferred. The mathematical representation and applications of non-parametric models have been presented in detail by Gatarek et al. (2006).

Papapantoleon&Skovmand (2011) stated that the log-normal LIBOR model driven by Brownian motion could not be sufficiently calibrated to the observed market data and that the dynamics of LIBOR rates could not be followed under every forward measurement due to the random terms that entered the dynamics of LIBOR rates during the creation of the model.

Hou and Skeie (2014) showed LIBOR as a combination of maturity and risk changes in Equation (9).

LIBOR = overnight risk-free interest rate + term premium + bank term credit risk +   (9)

term liquidity risk + term risk premium

2.3. Empirical Studies On the Determination of Libor Rates

Empirical studies conducted with the LMM method are presented in Table-1.

Table 1. Some Studies on LIBOR Modelling

Number	Writer	Dependent/ Independent Variables	Methods	Conclusion

1	Belomestny and Schoenmakers (2009)	The caplet-strike volatility matrix	A jump-diffusion Libor model	The jump diffusion Libor model is able to reproduce both of them with an acceptable accuracy, in crisis times prices are more strongly influenced by uncertainty about future and negative expectations. However, for the short term tenors the calibration errors growth up to about 13-25%.
2	Papapantoleon et.al (2011)	Caplet prices	Log-Lévi LIBOR model	Log-Lévi LIBOR approximation should be interpreted as a variance reduction technique for the LIBOR market model
4	Carol Alexander and Dmitri Lvov (2003)	LIBOR yield curve, 703 daily observation on UK LIBOR rates, FRAs and swap rates between 15/10/1999 and 25/06/2002	Principal Component Analysis	Forward rates that are obtained using Svensson (1994) technique is better than McCulloch (1975), Steely (1991) techniques.
5	Durre at.al. (2003)	German LIBOR data from 1989 until 1998	Cointegrating vector autoregressive model,	A "weak version" of the expectations hypothesis theory cannot be rejected on a horizon from one up to nine months, and the expectations hypothesis is compatible with German money market data.
6	Andrés & Scudiero (2023)	A set of 280 market EURO and USD swaptions volatilities	Heston, Edgeworth, Levenberg-Marquardt, Broyden-Fletcher-Goldfarb-Shanno algorithms	The number of unsatisfied Feller conditions is rather significant especially for the Heston and Edgeworth algorithms. The other algorithms handling linear inequality constraints cannot ensure that the points stay in the feasible set.

7	Cheng (2016)	USD swaptions data on 8 August 2007 and tenor combinations on the EUR market during 2015 and 2016	Monte Carlo simulation	The imperfectness of the parameters fitting is because of the simulation results to be less ideal than expected.
8	Wu and Zhang, (2006)	The US dollar data of July 05, 2002	Fast Fourier Transform, Heston and Monte Carlo simulation methods.	The adoption of a stochastic volatility generally does not change the average level of the implied volatility curve.
9	Devineau et al. (2017)	Average interest rate structure and swaption volatilities throughout the year 2016	Heston and Edgeworth simulation methods.	Edgeworth method has 98% reduction in computational time in the the Libor Market Model with Stochastic Volatility and Displaced Diffusion calibration process compared to the classical Heston method
10	Leippold and Strömberg (2013)	the U.S. dollar three-month forward LIBOR rate from August 8, 2007 to August 11, 2010	Kalman Filter and the Root Mean Squared Pricing Errors and the Mean Pricing Errors on caps and swaptions.	Especially for intermediate and long maturities, we found evidence that the markets for caps and swaptions have been well integrated even during the financial crisis but the pricing errors of short maturity contracts especially since early 2009.
11	Verschuren (2020)	On March 30th, 2012 up until April 28th, 2017, the discount factors and caplet prices can be obtained from the bootstrap method	The goodness-of-fit, the parameter stability and the out-of-sample pricing	Financial institutions can best adopt the multiple curve the Lévy Forward Price model in their Asset Liability Management studies with the the Linear-Exponential Volatility specification and with deterministic breakpoints.

Nawalkha (2009) stated that the formulas and calculation methods used for cap pricing and swaps within the scope of LMM are much more complex than Black-type formulas. LMM, a financial model type used especially for pricing interest rates and interest derivatives, models interest rate fluctuations using stochastic processes. However, in LMM models, Monte Carlo simulation is used because the pricing of interest rates and derivative products is generally difficult or impossible to calculate directly with analytical solutions. The use of the LMM method in real life is quite limited due to the need to use Monte Carlo simulation, the complexity of the model, and the need for constant updating. In addition, the fact that LIBOR is no longer in use has led to the need for revision in LMM.

3. METHODOLOGY [MULTI-LAYER PERCEPTRON (MLP)]

In Traditional Linear Regression, which is one of the most frequently used models in econometrics; the linearity of the model, the absence of a complete linear relationship between any of the independent variables, the expected value of the error term in the i observation in the sample not being a function of the independent variables, the variance of the error terms not changing, the absence of autocorrelation between them, and normal distribution (Greene, 2012) assumptions must all be met. Such requirements are often not met even after the transformation of the variables, and the low performance obtained in this way may cause the models to be inadequate (Astray et al. 2010). In cases where these assumptions are not met, Traditional Linear Regression Models cannot be used.

To ensure the transparency and reproducibility of our model, the specific hyperparameters of the MLP architecture are detailed as follows. The model consists of two hidden layers, with 10 neurons in the first hidden layer and 5 in the second. The Hyperbolic Tangent (Tanh) was selected as the activation function due to its zero-centered nature. The network was trained using the Adam optimizer with a learning rate of 0.001. The training process was conducted over 100 epochs with a batch size of 32.

To preserve the chronological integrity of the time-series data, the dataset was divided into three distinct sets: a training set (70%, 283 observations), a validation set (15%, 61 observations), and a test set (15%, 61 observations). The validation set was used during the training process for hyperparameter tuning and to implement the 'early stopping' mechanism. This approach ensures that the model is trained on past data and validated on subsequent data before its final performance is assessed on the unseen test set, mimicking a real-world forecasting scenario.

Given the high explanatory power of the model, measures were taken to mitigate the risk of overfitting. An 'early stopping' mechanism was implemented, which halts the training process if the loss on the validation set fails to improve over a specified number of epochs (patience=10). Additionally, L2 regularization (with a lambda of 0.01) was applied to the weights of the hidden layers during the optimization process, penalizing large weights to enhance the model's generalization capabilities.

In the empirical study to be conducted on the modeling of LIBOR; MLP, which is an artificial intelligence application, will be used due to the problems that occur in Linear Regression such as flexibility in modeling different data distributions, relaxation of the normality assumption, robustness against outliers, modeling for various data types, and variance not remaining constant.

ML is one of the important areas of AI and computer science, which focuses on the use of data and algorithms to mimic the way people learn and gradually increase their accuracy (IBM, 2023). ML, deep learning (DL), and neural networks (NN) are subfields of artificial intelligence. NN is a subfield of ML and DL is a subfield of NN.

NN are massively parallel distributed processors consisting of simple processing units that have a natural tendency to store experiential knowledge and make it ready for use, and are likened to the brain because the network acquires and stores knowledge from its environment through a learning process. (Haykin, 2008)

DL allows computational models consisting of multiple processing layers to learn data representations with multiple levels of abstraction. DL reveals complex structure in large datasets by using the backpropagation algorithm to specify how a machine should change its internal parameters used to calculate the representation in each layer from the representation in the previous layer. This method has helped technological advances in many other fields such as speech recognition, visual object recognition, object detection, and drug discovery and genomics. (LeCun et al. 2015) DL generally uses a variety of structures including multilayer neural networks (MLPs), convolutional neural networks (CNNs), or recurrent neural networks (RNNs).

The most well-known and most commonly used type of NN, MLP has a feedforward architecture, where signals are transmitted in one direction within the network from input to output. (Popescu et al. 2009) MLP is one of the fundamental building blocks of deep learning. MLPs are a type of artificial neural network that contains at least one hidden layer and has connections between the input and output layers. The mathematical representation of the multi-layer perceptron is below (Zhang et al. 2023).

$$H = \delta(XW^1) + b^1 \qquad (10)$$

$$O = HW^2 + b^2$$

In Equation (10), H represents the outputs of the hidden layer, δ represents a nonlinear activation function (such as ReLU, Sigmoid, hyperbolic tangent (Tanh)), X represents the inputs, W^1 represents the hidden layer weights, b^1 represents the bias of the hidden layer, O represents the outputs, W^2 represents the weights of the outputs and b^2 represents the bias of the outputs. Tanh is more regular than other functions and is centered at a or zero in the range of (-1 ,1). The mathematical expression of the Tanh function to be used in the study is as follows in Equation (11) (Tomar and Laxkar, 2022)

$$f(x) = 2 * \text{logistic}(2x) - 1 \qquad (11)$$

We acknowledge the 'black-box' nature of MLP models as a limitation in terms of interpretability. While this study uses synaptic weights as a basic indicator of feature importance, future research could employ eXplainable AI (XAI) techniques, such as SHAP (SHapley Additive exPlanations) or LIME (Local Interpretable Model-agnostic Explanations), to provide more granular insights into the marginal contributions of each input variable to the model's predictions.

4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

In the study, the one-month USD LIBOR rate was selected as the dependent variable. Monthly data covering the period from September 1989 to April 2023 (417 observations) was obtained from global-rates.com (retrieved August 5, 2024). The US Federal Reserve's policy rate (Effective Federal Funds Rate, series code: FEDFUNDS) was used as the independent variable, with data sourced from the Federal Reserve Economic Data (FRED) database provided by the St. Louis Fed. Descriptive statistics for the variables are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive of Variables

	LIBOR1	POLICYRATEUS
Mean	2,95	2,78
Median	2,46	2,25
Maximum	9,13	9,06
Minimum	0,08	0,13
Std. Dev.	2,45	2,41
Skewness	0,42	0,44
Kurtosis	1,99	2,00

Unit root test results for dependent and independent variables are in Table-3.

To examine the stationarity properties of the series, Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) unit root tests were conducted, with the results presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Unit Root Tests of Variables

	Level		First Difference	
	ADF Sta.	Prob.(*)	ADF Sta.	Prob.(**)
LIBOR1	-2,3811	0,1478*	-7,7539	0,0000**
POLICYRATEUS	-2,4792	0,1213*	-6,2082	0,0000**

Null Hypothesis: Series have a unit root

(*) : The null hypothesis is accepted at the level of =0.01.

(**) : The null hypothesis is rejected at all the level =0.01.

As the unit root tests in Table 3 indicate that both series are integrated of order one, I(1), their long-run relationship was investigated using the Engle-Granger cointegration method. The results are presented in Table 4. While the cointegration results in Table 4 indicate a strong long-run relationship with a high adjusted R², the model's residuals violate key OLS assumptions. The normality assumption was rejected based on the Jarque-Bera test (JB Statistic: 25.8, p=0.0000), as illustrated in Figure 4. Furthermore, as shown in Table 5, the residuals exhibit significant serial correlation.

In Table 4, the existence of unit root of dependent and independent variables cannot be rejected. Therefore, the cointegration model created is below.

Table 4. Cointegration Result

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
POLICYRATEUS	1,0154	0,0071	142,8996	0,0000
c	0,1227	0,0263	4,6734	0,0000

When the cointegration results are examined, it is seen that the p values for the coefficient values for the US policy interest rates and the constant are 0. Again, the adjusted R^2 value is 0.99 and the explanatory power of the model is quite high. However, the residuals should be normally distributed and there should be no autocorrelation. The Figure regarding the normality of the error terms is below.

Figure-4: Normal Distribution Test of Error Terms

Series: Residuals	
Sample 2 404	
Observations 403	
Mean	0.003719
Median	-0.027847
Maximum	2.671501
Minimum	-0.531847
Std. Dev.	0.218113
Skewness	5.910444
Kurtosis	62.83517
Jarque-Bera	62464.69
Probability	0.000000
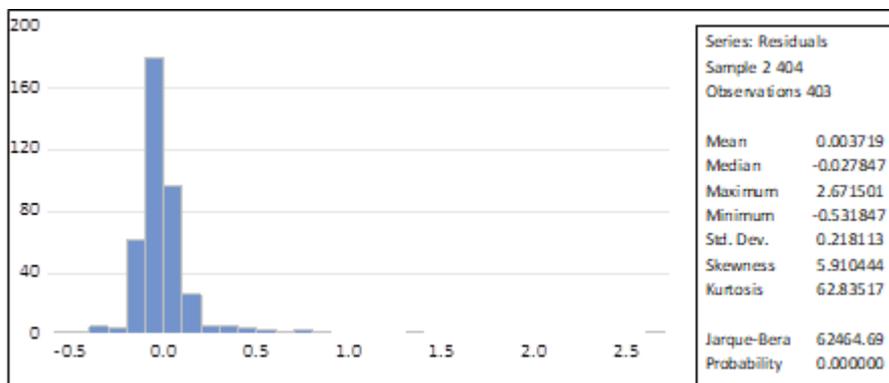
Although the skewness should be 0 and the kurtosis should be 3, it is seen that the results are quite high and therefore the error term is not normally distributed. In addition, as seen in Table 5, the existence of autocorrelation cannot be rejected.

Table 5. Autocorrelation Result

	AC	PAC	Q-Stat	Prob
1	0,4610	0,4610	86,1300	0,0000
2	0,3770	0,2100	144,1200	0,0000
3	0,3320	0,1300	189,1300	0,0000
4	0,2570	0,0320	216,1400	0,0000
5	0,2470	0,0670	241,1700	0,0000
6	0,2650	0,1000	269,9500	0,0000
7	0,2230	0,0250	290,4200	0,0000
8	0,1360	-0,0730	298,0300	0,0000
9	0,1960	0,0890	313,8700	0,0000
10	0,1450	-0,0070	322,5600	0,0000
11	0,1130	-0,0200	327,8300	0,0000
12	0,1420	0,0390	336,2600	0,0000

For the MLP model, the data was pre-processed. Prior to model training, 12 observations were identified as outliers based on the three-sigma rule (i.e., values exceeding three standard deviations from the mean) and were removed to prevent distortion of the model's learning process. Of the remaining 405 periods, the data was chronologically split into a training set (294 observations) and a test set (111 observations).

These assumption violations—namely, non-normality and autocorrelation—undermine the reliability of the OLS-based cointegration estimates. Although these issues could be addressed within an econometric framework using methods such as a Vector Error Correction Model (VECM) or applying heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation consistent (HAC) standard errors, this study opts for a non-parametric MLP approach. While alternative time-series models like ARIMA were also considered, they were discarded due to similar violations of normality and autocorrelation in their residuals. The MLP model is inherently robust to such distributional assumptions and is better suited to capture the complex, non-linear dynamics often present in financial time series.

Figure -5: Network Diagram
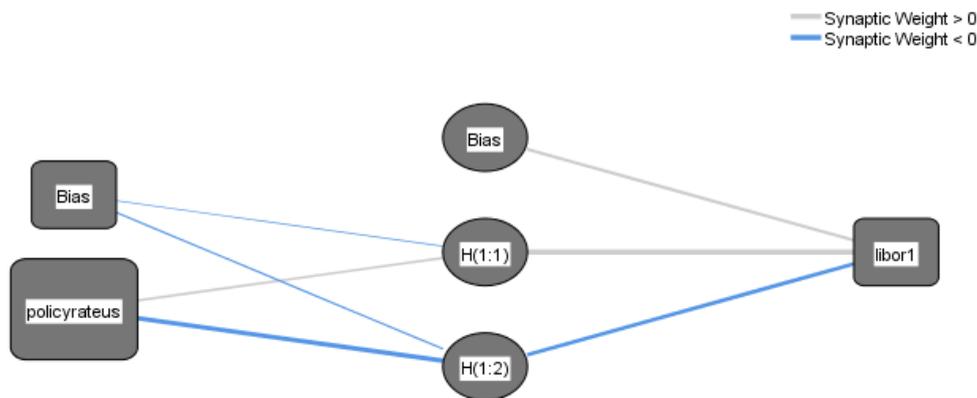
In artificial neural networks, a "synaptic weight" quantifies the strength and direction of the connection between two neurons. The magnitude (or absolute value) of the weight indicates the

influence of that connection on the output; a larger magnitude implies a stronger influence. The sign of the weight determines the nature of the connection: a positive weight has an excitatory effect (increasing the output), while a negative weight has an inhibitory effect (decreasing the output).

In our model, as shown in Table 6, the synaptic weights connecting the hidden layers to the output neuron reveal the relative importance of these connections. For instance, the large positive weight from the first hidden neuron (H(1:1) to Output: 2.87) indicates a strong, excitatory influence. Conversely, the smaller negative weight from the second neuron (H(1:2) to Output: -0.37) suggests a weaker, inhibitory influence. This analysis points to the first hidden layer having a more dominant role in shaping the model's final prediction.

Table 6. Synaptic Weights of the MLP Model

		H(1:1)	H(1:2)	LIBOR1
Input Layer	(Bias)	-0,15857	-0,27895	
	policyrateus	0,320783	-0,43335	
Hidden Layer 1	(Bias)			0,338541
	H(1:1)			2,87658
	H(1:2)			-0,37143

When working on MLP (Multilayer Perceptrons) or other artificial neural network models, "Relative Error" is a measure that is often used to evaluate how well the model's predictions match the true values. A low relative error can indicate that the model's predictions are close to the true values, while a high relative error can indicate that the model's predictions are significantly different from the true values. The very low relative errors in Table-7 indicate that the predictions are quite close to the true values.

Table 7. MLP Model Performance Summary

Performance Metric	Training Set	Test Set
Sum of Squares Error (SSE)	1.404	0.434
Relative Error	0.010	0.007

The performance of the trained MLP model was evaluated using both training and unseen test data, with key error metrics summarized in Table 7. The model demonstrates exceptional predictive accuracy and a strong ability to generalize to new data.

As shown in the table, the Sum of Squares Error (SSE) on the test set is a minimal 0.434, and the Relative Error is just 0.007. These extremely low error values indicate that the model's predictions are consistently very close to the actual observed LIBOR rates. The model's overall explanatory power is 0.99, which further confirms its robust performance and is consistent with the initial cointegration analysis. The close alignment between the predicted and actual values is visualized in Figure 6, where the model's outputs are shown to track the real-world data with high fidelity.

Figure-6: Predicted by Observed
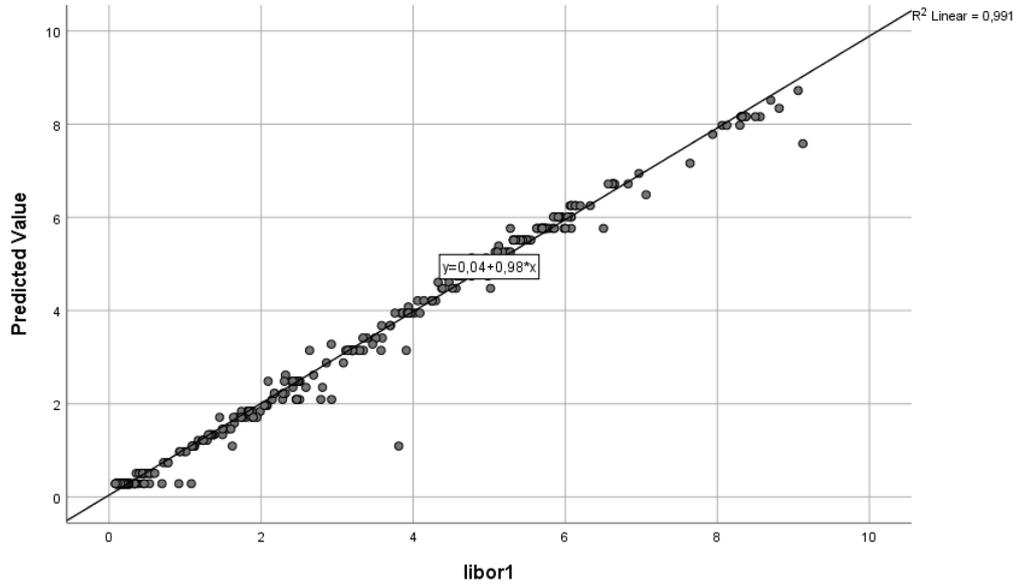
The error terms are calculated using a function, usually called a "loss function" or "error function". This function measures the difference between the actual and estimated outputs and produces an error value. The error terms are usually propagated back (backpropagated) based on the difference between the actual and estimated values and are used to adjust the parameters of the model (e.g. synaptic weights). This process aims to reduce the error terms so that they are as close to zero as possible so that the model can make better predictions. The distribution of the error terms is shown in Figure 7 and is seen to be close to zero.

Figure-7: Residual by Predicted
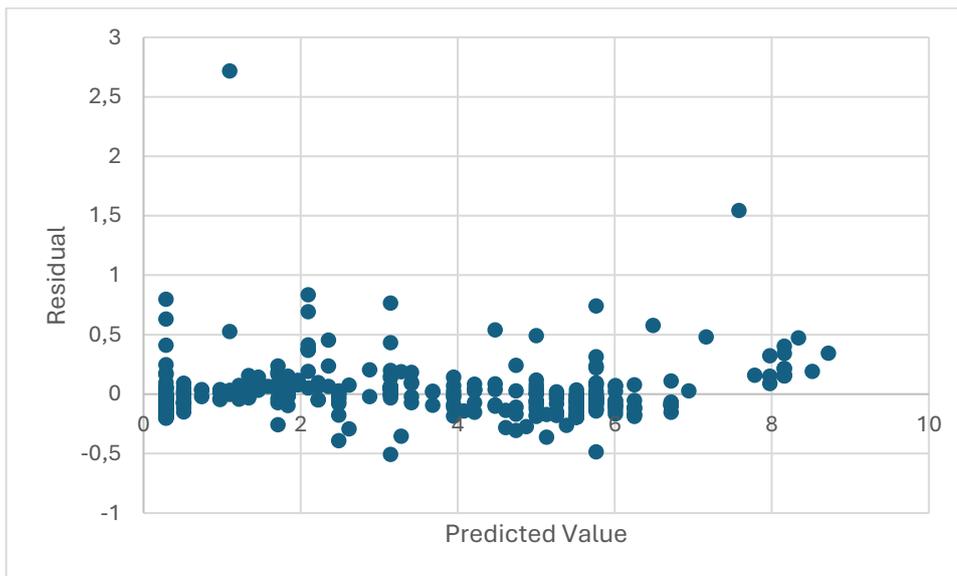
It is important to note that this study employs a parsimonious model, using only the FED policy rate as an independent variable to isolate this fundamental relationship. We recognize that other macro-financial variables, such as inflation expectations, credit default swap (CDS) premiums, and bond market spreads, also influence LIBOR. The exclusion of these variables is a limitation of the current

model, and their inclusion in future, more complex MLP architectures could further enhance predictive accuracy.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The accurate modeling of variable interest rates is paramount for financial stability and decision-making processes, particularly for individuals, corporations, and governments reliant on borrowing. LIBOR historically served as a cornerstone reference rate for such financial instruments but has since been superseded by alternative rates like SOFR. This study addresses the challenges in modeling LIBOR, acknowledging both its historical significance and the complexities that led to its replacement by new rates.

The evolution of interest rate modeling, from Bachelier's Arithmetic Brownian Motion to the sophisticated LIBOR Market Model (LMM), reflects the increasing complexity of financial markets. Although LMM offers a theoretically sound framework, its practical application encounters obstacles such as data scarcity, calibration difficulties, and reliance on time-consuming simulations. Furthermore, the discontinuation of LIBOR necessitates the revision of existing models or the development of new ones.

In this research, traditional econometric approaches (notably cointegration analysis), while initially indicating a strong relationship between LIBOR and the US Federal Reserve (FED) policy rate, were found to violate key statistical assumptions, such as the normal distribution of residuals and the absence of autocorrelation. These limitations led to the adoption of a Multi-Layer Perceptron (MLP), an artificial intelligence technique, chosen for its capacity to model complex, non-linear relationships and its flexibility in handling data that does not conform to rigid statistical prerequisites.

The empirical investigation utilized monthly one-month LIBOR data (September 1989-April 2023) as the dependent variable and the FED policy rate as the independent variable. The MLP model, employing two hidden layers and the Tanh activation function, demonstrated exceptional performance. The model achieved an explanatory power (R^2) of 0.99, with very low relative errors and residuals close to zero. This strongly indicates that the MLP model effectively captured the dynamics between the variables. A crucial finding confirmed that LIBOR movements closely mirrored the FED policy rate; this was consistent with the initial cointegration results but achieved without the associated assumption violations. Synaptic weight analysis further suggested that the first hidden layer had a more significant impact on the model's output.

Policy Implications

The findings of this study robustly demonstrate that the FED policy rate is a primary determinant of LIBOR (and other similarly behaving benchmark interest rates). This confirms the significant importance of central banks' monetary policy decisions and communication strategies due to their direct impact on market interest rates. For policymakers and market participants, this implies that expectations regarding the FED's future policy actions play a critical role in forecasting the direction of short-term interest rates and, consequently, financing costs. Our findings suggest that market participants can leverage non-linear AI models like MLP to gain more accurate and timely forecasts of benchmark rates following changes in central bank policy, potentially outperforming traditional models that are slower to calibrate to new market regimes.

Limitations

This study is subject to several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. First, the reliance on a single predictor variable, while useful for isolating a core relationship, omits other relevant macro-financial factors that undoubtedly influence benchmark rates. Second, the 'black-box' nature of the MLP model restricts the economic interpretability of the underlying

mechanisms, representing a trade-off for its predictive power. Third, the high R² value, while indicating a strong fit, also suggests a potential risk of overfitting, even with the regularization and early stopping measures in place. The model's generalization performance should be further validated using techniques such as k-fold cross-validation in future studies. Finally, the performance of the MLP model was not benchmarked against traditional time-series models like ARIMA or the LMM itself. Such a comparative analysis would be necessary in future research to rigorously quantify the MLP's relative advantage.

Recommendations for Future Research and Developments

This study opens several avenues for future research. Firstly, modeling the FED policy rate itself would be an important step toward enhancing the forecast accuracy of LIBOR and similar rates. Secondly, the adaptation of LMM and AI models like MLP to the new generation of Risk-Free Rates (RFRs) such as SOFR, SONIA, and €STR, and testing their efficacy as sufficient data accumulates, is necessary. Thirdly, concurrently with the discontinuation of LIBOR, the development of derivative products (swaps, futures, options) based on new RFRs and risk management models, along with the creation of appropriate mathematical models for them, remains an ongoing area of research. Lastly, it is considered that digital platforms and AI applications will enable more effective use of LMM-type models by making processes such as the trading of interest rate-based derivatives, risk management, pricing, and data analytics more efficient. A detailed examination of the direct and indirect impacts of the policy rate on LIBOR also constitutes an important topic for future studies.

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ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Güney Kore ve Kuzey Kore'nin Siyasal Katılım ve Demokrasi Karşılaştırması
Political Participation and Democracy Comparison of South Korea and North Korea

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Özet

Bu çalışma, Güney Kore ve Kuzey Kore'nin siyasal sistemlerini, demokrasinin üç temel göstergesi olan siyasal katılım, ifade özgürlüğü ve düşünce özgürlüğüne odaklanarak karşılaştırmalı bir şekilde analiz etmektedir. Ortak bir tarihsel ve kültürel geçmişe sahip olmalarına rağmen, iki ülke temelde birbirinden tamamen farklı rejimler geliştirmiştir. Güney Kore yerleşik bir demokrasi olarak ortaya çıkarken, Kuzey Kore kökleşmiş bir totaliter devlet haline gelmiştir. Freedom House tarafından yayımlanan 2024 Dünya Özgürlükleri Raporu'na dayanan bu çalışma, her iki devletin anayasal yapıları, kurumsal mekanizmaları ve sivil ile siyasal özgürlüklerin fiili işleyişini değerlendirmektedir. Bulgular, Güney Kore'nin kurumsal denetim ve kamu katılımı yoluyla demokratik yönetişimi sürdürdüğünü; Kuzey Kore'nin ise merkeziyetçi, ideoloji odaklı bir rejim altında muhalefeti ve bireysel hakları sistematik olarak bastırdığını ortaya koymaktadır. Bu çalışma, rejim tipolojileri üzerine yapılan daha geniş kapsamlı tartışmalara katkı sunarak, hukuki çerçevelerin ve siyasal ideolojilerin demokratik özgürlüklerin uygulamadaki düzeyini nasıl şekillendirdiğini göstermektedir

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Anahtar kelimeler: Kuzey Kore, Güney Kore, Freedom House, Siyasal Katılım, İfade ve Düşünce Özgürlüğü*

Abstract

This article offers a comparative analysis of the political systems of South and North Korea by focusing on three core indicators of democracy: political participation, freedom of expression, and freedom of thought. Despite sharing a common historical and cultural background, the two countries have developed fundamentally divergent regimes—South Korea emerging as a consolidated democracy, and North Korea as an entrenched totalitarian state. Drawing on the 2024 Freedom in the World report by Freedom House, the study evaluates the constitutional structures, institutional mechanisms, and the actual functioning of civil and political liberties in both states. The findings reveal that South Korea upholds democratic governance with institutional checks and public engagement, while North Korea systematically suppresses dissent and individual rights under a centralized, ideology-driven regime. The study contributes to the broader discourse on regime typologies, showing how legal frameworks and political ideologies shape the extent of democratic freedoms in practice.

Keywords: *North Korea, South Korea, Freedom House, Political Participation, freedom of expression and thought*

1. INTRODUCTION

Political participation and the freedom of expression and thought are regarded as two main pillars that constitute the foundation of modern democracies. These rights and freedoms not only determine individuals' opportunities to participate in governance, but also their capacity to express ideas freely, organize, and influence public policies. The Korean Peninsula offers a striking opportunity for comparison regarding the exercise of these rights through the examples of South Korea and North Korea, which share the same historical roots but have adopted completely different political regimes. South Korea stands out as a case where political participation and freedom of expression have been institutionalized through a multi-party democratic structure and a relatively free media environment. In contrast, North Korea systematically suppresses these fundamental rights through one-party dominance, a cult of leadership, and extensive censorship mechanisms. This study aims to comparatively examine the possibilities for political participation and the levels of freedom of expression in both countries, based on Freedom House's annual reports and the relevant academic literature. In doing so, it will evaluate the impact of political regimes on democratic legitimacy and individual rights within the framework of structural and ideological differences.

2. 2. THEORETİCAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Political Systems

The political system is a network of relationships that produces policies in response to inputs such as demands, support, and feedback from the public, regulating the interaction between the government and society in this process (Heywood, 2020, p. 397). The political system is one of the fundamental subsystems of the social structure and plays a central role in the functioning of society alongside biological, social, ecological, economic, and cultural systems. This system encompasses the decision-making processes regarding how the material and moral values of society will be distributed through legitimate authority, as well as the institutional structures that manage these processes.

The political system is not merely limited to the functioning of state organs such as the executive, legislative, and judiciary, as defined within constitutional and legal frameworks. The way this institutional structure operates is also shaped by a country's socio-economic structure, level of development, historical experiences, cultural characteristics, and adopted ideological orientations. Therefore, the political system is not a structure composed solely of legal regulations; rather, it is a multilayered and complex set of relationships that interact with all the dynamics of society. This multidimensional interaction directly affects both the functioning and the social legitimacy of the political system (Terkan, 2014, p. 66; Gökçe, Aksu & Fatsa, 2025, p. 171).

Political systems are the institutional structures and sets of human relationships that determine how power is formed, exercised, and distributed within society. While political power determines who controls social resources and to what extent, the institutionalization of this power ensures the stability and legitimacy of the political system. In this context, the political system regulates not only the relationship between the rulers and the ruled, but also the processes of creating, distributing, and redistributing social resources (Şaylan, 1981, pp. 5–6). The main function of the political system is to regulate and reconcile the conflicts of interest among various classes and groups within society and to carry out the political decision-making process on a legitimate basis. In shaping the political system, not only the legal and institutional framework but also the social structure, economic power relations, and ideological tendencies play a decisive role. For this reason, the analysis of the political system should focus not only on constitutional forms, but also on how power actually operates, the political culture of the society, and the interaction patterns of the actors (Şaylan, 1981, pp. 5–6).

An early example of this intellectual foundation can be seen in Aristotle's classification. In the 4th century BCE, Aristotle examined the Greek city-states and divided forms of government into six regime types based on the questions "who rules?" and "for whose benefit is the rule exercised?" Monarchies, aristocracies, and politeia were considered good governments based on the benefit of

society, while tyranny, oligarchy, and corrupt democracy were seen as degenerate regimes serving only the interests of the rulers. According to Aristotle, rule by the people was dangerous because it could easily fall under the influence of demagogues; therefore, a mixed regime governed by the middle class was the most viable form of government. His views formed the intellectual foundation of later discussions on political systems.

This understanding was further developed by modern political theorists concerned with the nature of sovereignty. Bodin defined sovereignty as an indivisible and centralized power and advocated for absolutism. Hobbes also conceptualized sovereignty as an unlimited and absolute authority. In contrast, Locke proposed a system based on popular sovereignty by defending the protection of individual rights and the principle of limited government. Montesquieu laid the foundations of the modern constitutional system by emphasizing the separation of legislative, executive, and judicial powers.

With the evolution of constitutional regimes over time, Aristotle's normative classification has given way to modern distinctions in political systems based on constitutional and institutional characteristics. Today, political systems are evaluated based on structural differences such as monarchy–republic and parliamentary–presidential systems. This shift necessitates analyzing political systems more in terms of institutions, processes, and functioning mechanisms (Heywood, 2020, p. 400). Government systems are understood as the set of arrangements that define the distribution of powers among the fundamental branches of the state—legislative, executive, and judicial—and determine how these powers interact through institutional structures. Alongside electoral mechanisms, political parties, socio-economic conditions, and historical background, these systems constitute one of the core components of the political structure. In modern states, the way powers and responsibilities are distributed among these branches serves as an important criterion distinguishing government systems from other elements of the political system. Democratic government systems are generally examined under three main models: in parliamentary systems, the separation between the legislative and executive branches is relatively flexible, whereas in presidential systems, this separation is more rigid. The semi-presidential system combines certain features of both models, forming a hybrid structure. These systems aim to protect individual rights and freedoms, maintain democratic order, ensure fair representation, promote administrative efficiency, and strengthen political stability (Gökçe & Aksu, 2019, p. 601).

2.2. Democracy, Authoritarianism, and Hybrid Regimes

Debates on democracy are not limited solely to legitimacy; they also reflect a deep confusion regarding the nature of the concept. Originating from Ancient Greece, democracy is derived from the words "demos" (the people) and "kratos" (power), meaning "rule of the people." However, this simple definition is insufficient to explain the complexity of democracy. Over time, democracy has come to be regarded as a universal "good," but this popularity has blurred the political content of the concept. According to Bernard Chirik, democracy is one of the most heavily loaded concepts in the public sphere, and for that reason, it carries the risk of losing its meaning. Democracy can be defined in various ways: rule by the poor, direct public participation, equality of opportunity, welfare state, majority rule, minority rights, competitive elections, and governance for the benefit of the people. Among this diversity, Abraham Lincoln's definition—"government of the people, by the people, for the people"—offers an important framework that connects democracy with the people. This definition emphasizes democracy's link to the public (Heywood, 2020, pp. 146-147; Aksu, 202, pp.5). For democracy to function properly, the presence of certain fundamental principles and conditions is essential. Chief among these are liberty, equality, and the right of the majority to rule. Liberty refers to individuals being able to express their thoughts and lead their lives freely within constitutional boundaries; equality refers to all citizens benefiting equally from state services and rights without discrimination. The right of the majority to rule ensures that the will of the people is reflected in governance through free and fair elections. The absence of these elements causes the democratic order to remain only at a formal level (Gökçe, 2021, pp. 62–63).

Democracy has developed in various forms across different geographies and has adapted to multidimensional ideological and political demands. Today, there is no consensus on a single understanding of democracy, and various models have emerged, each considering its own approach to be correct. Democracy has been shaped not only by theoretical principles but also by the historical and social structure of the societies in which it is practiced. Within this framework:
– Classical democracy refers to the Ancient Athenian model based on direct public participation;
– Protective democracy is associated with liberal thought that defends the individual against state intervention;
– Developmental democracy emphasizes individual and social progress;
– People's democracy is based on Marxist-Leninist principles applied in socialist regimes;
– Liberal democracy relies on a constitutional order that prioritizes individual freedoms and the rule of law (Gökçe & Dölek, 2018).

These definitions, theories, and criteria reveal that democracy is not merely a form of government, but a multidimensional political system built upon fundamental values such as participation, liberty, equality, and accountability. However, in practice, it is not always possible to implement these values completely and consistently. Today, hybrid regimes, which are frequently encountered, preserve the existence of democratic institutions while also incorporating authoritarian practices, thereby weakening the core principles of democracy. The restriction of political participation, the undermining of judicial independence, and the limitation of media freedom are among the prominent problems of these regimes.

Similarly, in immature democracies, although elections may be free and fair, the lack of a robust political culture and low levels of citizen participation prevent the healthy functioning of democratic processes. Therefore, democracy gains meaning not only through the presence of institutions but also through their proper functioning, the conscious participation of citizens, and the effective protection of fundamental rights and freedoms.

In this context, the democracy criteria developed by Freedom House, founded in 1941, serve as an important point of reference for evaluating democratic regimes. Freedom House defines democratic regimes based on the presence of free and fair elections, the right to free political choice, freedom of expression, and the existence of an independent media and civil society. However, in many countries, the failure to fully meet these criteria has led to the emergence of semi-functional forms of democracy. As a result, the process of democratization is not limited to elections alone; it is only possible through the effective protection of fundamental rights and freedoms (Gökçe, 2013, pp. 61–66).

Authority is defined, in its most basic sense, as a legitimate form of power. While power refers to the ability to influence individuals' behavior, authority involves the right to exercise that power. In this context, authority is based not on coercion or force, but on obedience that is accepted by society. As long as it is based on legitimacy, authority refers to the rightful and acceptable use of power.

In society, authority manifests in different forms. Traditional authority is based on cultural norms and long-standing practices; charismatic authority derives its strength from the personal qualities of a leader; and legal-rational authority represents a form of governance based not on individuals but on rules and laws. However, when authority loses its legitimacy or becomes concentrated in a single hand, it may turn into authoritarianism.

In authoritarian governments, power is maintained not through social approval, but through pressure, control, and expectations of obedience (Heywood, 2020, p. 28). Authoritarianism is a form of governance in which power is exercised from the top down without the need for direct public consent. In such a system, authority is not considered legitimate; therefore, it operates not through popular support but through centrally imposed control. Authoritarian regimes prioritize the power of the ruler over individual rights. Unlike totalitarian systems, these regimes do not attempt to control all aspects of society but rather seek to keep the public away from the political sphere. They are generally associated with military governments, classical dictatorships, and absolute monarchies (Heywood, 2020, p. 413).

Following the Cold War, the dissolution of authoritarian regimes led to the widespread adoption

of multi-party elections in many countries. However, this development did not always result in the emergence of democratic governments. Despite the existence of elections, factors such as restrictions on media freedom, limited space for opposition, misuse of public resources, and pressure on voters have caused political competition to function in favor of the ruling power, and such systems have been defined as "hybrid regimes."

Initially seen as a transitional phase of democratization, these structures in some countries gradually became more authoritarian, while in others, former authoritarian elites merely changed their labels without altering their practices. Therefore, it has come to be recognized that hybrid regimes do not necessarily represent a direct transition to democracy and are instead unstable and complex systems in their own right.

In this context, the literature on hybrid regimes has introduced terms such as "illiberal democracy," "electoral authoritarianism," and "façade democracy," describing these systems as ones that restrict political participation while maintaining an outward appearance of democratization (Temir, 2022, p. 119).

To understand hybrid regimes, one must first approach democracy conceptually. Democracy is based on the principle of self-governance by the people and encompasses values such as equality, freedom, human rights, the rule of law, and pluralism. However, when the majority captures power and excludes minorities, this system can evolve into an authoritarian structure. Therefore, justice and fair governance must be among the fundamental principles of democracy.

The state is the entity that holds sovereign authority within a defined territory. How the state exercises this sovereignty—and the political, economic, and social policies it implements—determines whether it takes on a democratic or authoritarian character.

Theoretically, liberal states prioritize freedom and individual rights, but in practice, crises may push these states toward authoritarian tendencies. In such systems, although leaders may come to power through elections, democratic norms weaken, and legislative and executive powers may become concentrated in a single authority. These transitional and complex structures are referred to as hybrid regimes. Hybrid regimes are forms of government in which democratic elements and authoritarian tendencies coexist (Gökçe, 2019, p. 149).

2.3 Methodological Note

This study adopts a comparative qualitative research design, relying primarily on secondary data obtained from Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2024 report and relevant scholarly literature. The analysis follows a descriptive–comparative approach that identifies institutional, ideological, and structural differences between South Korea and North Korea in terms of political participation and democratic freedoms. By systematically evaluating Freedom House indicators alongside constitutional and political developments, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how regime type shapes the level of democracy in both countries.

2.4. Freedom House Evaluation Criteria

Freedom House is an independent organization established in 1941 in the United States, focused on supporting democracy, human rights, and freedoms. The organization evaluates countries annually in terms of political rights and civil liberties through its *Freedom in the World* report. This evaluation is based on a scoring system consisting of 25 questions covering areas such as the electoral process, political pluralism, the functioning of government, freedom of expression, associational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy (Freedom House, 2024c).

As a result of the evaluation, countries are classified as "Free," "Partly Free," or "Not Free." Scoring is done out of a maximum of 40 points for political rights and 60 points for civil liberties. The scoring system takes into account not only legal regulations but also the actual status of rights and freedoms in practice. In addition to this, Freedom House also publishes other reports such as *Freedom*

on the Net and *Nations in Transit*, which focus on digital freedoms and regional democratic developments (Freedom House, 2024a; 2024b).

This methodology parallels political scientist Larry Diamond's (1999) definition of liberal democracy. According to Diamond, a democratic regime is not defined solely by the presence of elections but also by the protection of freedom of expression, the rule of law, accountability, and the safeguarding of individual rights. Freedom House's evaluation criteria are compatible with this comprehensive understanding of democracy. As an independent organization aiming to promote global freedoms, Freedom House has advocated for democracy for more than 75 years.

As one of the pioneering institutions promoting global freedom in the United States, Freedom House has several core objectives: identifying barriers to freedom, protecting political rights and fundamental civil liberties, supporting the strengthening of democratic processes, and providing assistance to individuals and groups working in the field of human rights. With 14 offices worldwide and programs in nearly 30 countries, the organization obtains the majority of its financial resources from institutions that provide development and humanitarian aid, such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. Department of State.

While actively implementing projects in regions such as Latin America and Southeast Asia, Freedom House also conducts specialized programs in countries like Tunisia, Azerbaijan, and Uganda focusing on freedom of expression, and works on issues concerning specific communities, such as LGBTI rights.

The organization's annual *Freedom in the World* report presents a summary of significant developments that occurred during the relevant period. For example, the 2016 report was published under the title: *"Anxious Dictators, Wavering Democracies: Global Freedom under Pressure."* After explaining the evaluation methods used, the report analyzes the overall situation of countries for that year and discusses major events in detail. Global and regional freedom trends are presented comprehensively, supported by population data and freedom scores.

In the final section, countries are rated from 1 (best) to 7 (worst) in terms of political rights and civil liberties; additionally, an overall freedom score is given on a scale from 1 to 100. Based on these scores, countries are categorized as "Free," "Partly Free," or "Not Free." The reports also indicate score changes compared to previous years, clearly highlighting progress or regression in the field of freedom (Ateş & Akpınar, 2017).

3. 3. POLİTİCAL SYSTEMS OF SOUTH KOREA AND NORTH KOREA

3.1. The Political Structure of South Korea

Although South Korea's political system has historically passed through periods of authoritarian rule, it entered a democratization process based on a presidential system following the constitutional reforms of 1987. The Republic of Korea, founded in 1948, developed under American influence from the outset; however, its early years were marked by political instability, military coups, and one-man rule. The authoritarian period, which began with the military coup of Park Chung-hee in 1961, was broken in the 1980s through the influence of popular movements, and with the 1987 Constitution, a democratic government was established in which the president is elected by the people.

This transformation encouraged the development of civil society, strengthened local governments, and increased political pluralism. However, the threat posed by North Korea led to the suppression of particularly left-wing movements in the political sphere and made the institutionalization of political parties more difficult.

As of 2024, executive power in South Korea is vested in the president, who is elected by the people for a five-year term. The president has the authority to dissolve the National Assembly, appoint the prime minister and ministers, but these appointments require the approval of the National Assembly to take effect.

Following the 2024 elections, in which the opposition gained a parliamentary majority, the

process of impeaching President Yoon Suk Yeol was initiated, and his powers were temporarily suspended. These developments reveal the functionality of South Korea's democratic checks and balances and the degree of institutionalization of its political system (Kılıçdaroğlu & Arslantaş, 2021; Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024).

3.1.1. Political Participation

In South Korea, political participation underwent a significant transformation with the transition to democracy that began in 1987. With the end of military rule, the direct election of the president by popular vote and the holding of free elections marked a turning point in the democratization process. The first free elections held in 1988 solidified this process. During the same period, civil society organizations and labor unions regained visibility, and public participation in local governments increased.

However, the weak level of institutionalization of political parties, the prevalence of leader-centered structures and factionalism, weakened the relationship between voters and political parties. This situation led to political participation occurring more indirectly through individual efforts and civil society activities.

Furthermore, due to the perceived threat from North Korea, ruling governments have at times preferred security-oriented rhetoric, which has resulted in the narrowing of the space for political participation during certain periods (Kılıçdaroğlu & Arslantaş, 2021).

3.1.2. Freedom of Expression and Thought

The democratization process in South Korea also brought progress in the area of freedom of expression and thought. Pressures on the media were eased, and greater space was created for the public expression of diverse opinions. With the development of civil society organizations, critical discourses directed at public policies became more visible.

However, traces of the authoritarian past occasionally persisted, particularly due to security concerns related to North Korea; political and civil liberties were at times restricted on this basis. The suppression of labor movements and the obstruction of left-wing parties' growth indicate that freedom of expression remained limited not only legally but also in practice.

Moreover, South Korea's conservative social structure, rooted in Confucian values, has culturally influenced freedom of expression, leading to reduced public space for dissenting opinions (Kılıçdaroğlu & Arslantaş, 2021).

3.2. The Political Structure of North Korea

The political structure of North Korea is built not only upon a socialist ideology but also on the institutionalization of a leader-centered cult. While ideological influences from the Soviet Union and China were prominent in the early years following independence, from the mid-1950s onward, under the leadership of Kim Il-sung, there was a noticeable effort to move away from these external influences and to chart an independent ideological path. The revisionist shifts that occurred in the Soviet Union after Stalin, along with the rising anti-socialist sentiments in Eastern Europe, led North Korea to adopt a closed, leader-centric model of governance.

In this context, the Juche ideology was developed—not merely as a political orientation, but as a philosophical foundation of a system where the individual gains meaning through society and all decisions are made by the leader on behalf of the people. This ideology, formalized by the 1972 Constitution, transformed into a political dogma centered on the thoughts of Kim Il-sung and came to shape the entire structure of the party, military, and society. This structure provided not only ideological but also dynastic political legitimacy.

The succession process that began in 2010 with Kim Jong-un's official designation as heir was completed in 2011 following the death of Kim Jong-il, transferring power to the third generation of leadership. Upon assuming power, Kim Jong-un revised both the party charter and the constitution,

rebranding the ruling ideology as the "Kim Il-sung–Kim Jong-il Thought" and reinterpreting Juche within this framework. The dual policy goal announced in 2013—simultaneous economic development and the construction of nuclear power—became a hallmark of this new era.

These developments further reinforced the sanctification of the Kim family, generating legitimacy through the leader's historical persona with phrases like "Kim Il-sung's Nation," "Kim Il-sung's Choson," and "Kim Il-sung's Party" (Ahn, 2019, pp. 5–8).

North Korea's political structure is organized around the absolute authority of the leader, in line with the three core principles of Juche ideology: independence (chaju), self-reliance (charip), and self-sufficiency (chawi). The ideological and political system developed by Kim Il-sung is not merely a form of governance but has evolved into a cult of leadership that institutionalizes the people's unconditional loyalty to the leader. The source of political legitimacy stems more from the leader's charismatic authority than from constitutional provisions, and all social spheres are ideologically shaped to align with this principle (Kakışım, 2017).

This structure has transformed into a rigid authoritarian model governed by a vertical chain of command, inherently excluding the possibility of political pluralism. Moreover, the North Korean regime is based on a centralized one-party system. All state organs are directly controlled by the Workers' Party of Korea and its absolute leader. Under the "Songun" (military-first politics) doctrine, developed especially during Kim Jong-il's era, the military has also risen to a decisive role in the political decision-making processes (Balcı, 2019).

3.2.1. Ideological and Structural Limits of Political Participation

In North Korea, political participation may appear to grant citizens the right to representation at the constitutional level; however, in practice, it functions within a strictly ideologically controlled framework. The political sphere has been shaped according to the boundaries set by **Juche ideology**, and participation has been designed to serve the needs of the regime rather than reflect individual will.

The leader-centered structure of Juche turns citizens not into participants in decision-making processes but into instruments tasked with legitimizing the absolute authority of the leader. In this model, the people are not genuinely participatory but rather mobilized; mass organizations, rallies, and symbolic elections function more as ideological loyalty tests than as means of real political representation.

In particular, Juche's definition of state-society relations as a unified whole prevents the formation of any intermediary institutions or oppositional representative structures between the individual and the ruling power. Thus, while political participation formally exists, it is substantively hollow.

This condition prevents citizens from expressing critical or alternative demands within the system; as a result, the political sphere has transformed into a domain where absolute loyalty is continuously tested (Kılıçdaroğlu & Demir, 2023, pp. 486–487).

3.2.2. Ideological Constraints on Freedom of Expression and the Cult of Leadership

In North Korea, although freedom of expression is formally recognized at the constitutional level, it is subject to severe restrictions in practice. The founding ideology of the regime, **Juche**, not only governs political decision-making processes but also directly shapes the production of thought and modes of expression. The principle of "independence," which lies at the core of Juche, promotes a defensive stance against external interference and simultaneously brings about a similar exclusionary attitude toward internal dissent.

This ideological framework has aligned all domains of expression—such as media, academia, art, and education—with the discourse of central authority. In particular, the **cult of leadership** built around Kim Il-sung defines critical thinking not only as a threat to the regime but also as an ideological deviation. Within this context, freedom of expression becomes a technically existent but practically unusable right.

Control mechanisms within society have become so internalized that self-censorship has turned into a nearly instinctive behavioral pattern. As a result, political expression can only exist within the boundaries set by the regime and only insofar as it serves the continuity of its ideology. All opinions outside these boundaries are systematically suppressed (Kılıçdaroğlu & Demir, 2023, pp. 486–487).

4. 4. COMPARATİVE ANALYSİS

4.1. Political Participation and Freedom of Expression in South Korea

With the constitutional reforms implemented in 1987, South Korea transitioned from an authoritarian regime to a democratic government, making significant progress in the areas of political participation and freedom of expression. Today, through a multi-party electoral system, an effective balance between the legislative and executive branches, and a vibrant civil society, citizens are actively engaged in political processes.

Freedom of the press and the right to organize are constitutionally protected. Although certain legal regulations—such as the National Security Act—can have restrictive effects, particularly on expressions associated with communism, such practices are subject to judicial review and can be limited through the intervention of civil society.

According to Freedom House's 2024 data, South Korea is classified among the "free" countries and receives high scores in both political rights and civil liberties. This framework demonstrates that democratization in South Korea has deepened not only at the legal level but also at the institutional and societal levels.

4.2. Political Participation and Freedom of Expression in North Korea

FREEDOM IN THE WORLD
2025

SOUTH KOREA 81/100
FREE

| POLİTİCAL RİGHTS | 32/40 |
| CİVİL LİBERTİES | 49/60 |

LAST YEAR'S SCORE AND STATUS

In North Korea, political participation and freedom of expression are rights that exist only in constitutional texts but are entirely suppressed in practice. The political system operates under the absolute dominance of the Workers' Party of Korea, and the entire state apparatus is structured around the leadership of the Kim dynasty. Elections are reduced to formal events in which only candidates selected by the party may participate.

Public participation in political processes is kept at a symbolic level, and any expression opposing the regime is met with severe punishment. Independent media, oppositional political organization, or civil society activity is effectively impossible. Censorship, surveillance, and propaganda are the main tools used to keep thought under control.

According to Freedom House's 2024 report, North Korea ranks among the lowest-rated

countries in terms of political rights and civil liberties, and it is categorized as "Not Free." This clearly reveals the totalitarian nature of the regime, which entirely excludes individual rights and freedoms.

4.3. Democracy and Freedom Status According to Freedom House Data: South Korea Overview

According to Freedom House's 2024 report, South Korea is classified in the "Free" category, with a total score of 83 out of 100. The country received 32 out of 40 in political rights and 49 out of 60 in civil liberties, demonstrating a strong democratic structure.

South Korea upholds core democratic principles such as regular power transitions, political pluralism, and freedom of expression. However, the country still faces challenges in areas such as minority rights, violence against women, and corruption. Additionally, legal bans on pro–North Korea activities are noted to potentially restrict legitimate political expression.

These findings indicate that checks and balances between the executive and legislative branches generally function well in South Korea, although there remains a need to strengthen social rights in certain areas.

Criterion Code	Criterion Title	Skor (0-4)
A1	**Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?**	**4**
A2	**Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?**	**4**
A3	**Are the election laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?**	**3**
B1	**Do people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groups?**	**3**
B2	**Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to gain power?**	**4**
B3	**Is the political sphere free from the influence of extra-political forces or non-political means?**	**3**
B4	**Do various segments of the population (ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT+, etc.) have full political rights?**	**3**
D1	**Is there a free and independent media?**	**3**
D2	**Can individuals freely express their religious beliefs or lack thereof?**	**4**
D3	**Is there academic freedom and an education system free from political indoctrination?**	**3**
D4	**Can individuals express their views on sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retaliation?**	**4**

Table 1. South Korea's Political Participation and Freedom of Expression and Thought Scores According to Freedom House Criteria:

The table presented above is based on the methodology of the *Freedom in the World* reports published by Freedom House (2024). Each criterion is scored on a scale from 0 (no freedom) to 4 (full freedom), and this system allows for a comparative analysis of countries' levels of political rights and civil liberties. This approach provides a systematic evaluation framework in terms of democratic governance, the rule of law, and the protection of fundamental rights.

4.4. Comprehensive Evaluation of Political and Social Freedoms in South Korea: Freedom House Perspective

A. Electoral Processes and Political Representation

A1 – Executive Election Process (4/4)
The 1988 Constitution of South Korea stipulates the direct election of the president for a single five-year term. The 2022 presidential elections were largely considered free and fair. Yoon Suk-yeol was elected president with 48.6% of the vote, while Lee Jae-myung, the Democratic Party candidate, received 47.8%.

A2 – Legislative Election Process (4/4)
South Korea's unicameral National Assembly, consisting of 300 members, includes 253 elected from local districts and 47 from party lists. In the 2020 elections, the Democratic Party (DP) won the majority. As of 2023, the DP held 168 seats, and the People Power Party (PPP) held 111 seats. However, local elections saw a relatively low voter turnout of 50.9%.

A3 – Electoral Laws and Administration (3/4)
The electoral process is overseen by the independent National Election Commission (NEC), composed of nine members appointed by the President, the National Assembly, and the Supreme Court. While elections are generally regarded as free and fair, complaints persist regarding issues such as gerrymandering and the division of electoral districts.

B. Political Pluralism and Competition

B1 – Political Pluralism and Competition (3/4)
South Korea has a strong multi-party system; two major parties and several smaller groups are active in the political arena. However, legal regulations such as the 1948 National Security Act impose restrictions on certain political expressions—particularly those perceived as pro–North Korea. A notable example is the 2014 Constitutional Court ruling that dissolved the Unified Progressive Party, citing this law.

B2 – Possibility of the Opposition Gaining Power (4/4)
The opposition has a high chance of gaining power; since the 1990s, several peaceful power transitions have taken place between conservative and liberal parties.

B3 – Influence of Forces Outside the Political Sphere (3/4)
Family-run conglomerates known as chaebols hold significant influence in both the economy and politics. In the past, these corporations were involved in corruption scandals with politicians, including presidents. In 2022, President Yoon pardoned several chaebol executives implicated in such scandals. Additionally, institutions like the National Intelligence Service (NIS) have occasionally sparked controversy due to their influence beyond the political realm.

B4 – Representation of Diverse Groups (3/4)
Non-ethnic Korean citizens have full political rights, yet their political representation remains low. Women legally have equal rights, but their representation in the National Assembly is only 19%. North Korean defectors are also present in the political arena, albeit to a limited extent.

D. Media and Freedom of Expression

D1 – Media and Freedom of Expression (3/4)
The media in South Korea is generally free and dynamic, with widespread journalism that questions government policies and uncovers misconduct. However, defamation laws, which carry prison or monetary penalties, pose a risk of self-censorship. Under the Yoon administration, there has been growing concern over pressure on journalists and lawsuits against media outlets. Content perceived as pro–North Korea can be heavily censored under the National Security Law (NSL).

D2 – Freedom of Religion (4/4)
The constitution guarantees religious freedom, and it is generally respected. However, some discriminatory incidents have been recorded, such as the prevention of mosque construction in Daegu in 2023. The length of alternative service for conscientious objectors has also been criticized as punitive.

FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2025

NORTH KOREA 3/100
NOT FREE

POLİTİCAL RİGHTS	0/40
CİVİL LİBERTİES	3/60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE AND STATUS
3/100   NOT FREE

D3 – Academic Freedom (3/4)
Academic freedom is largely upheld, but the NSL restricts discourse related to North Korea, and sensitive historical issues (e.g., Japan's wartime sexual slavery) increase the risk of self-censorship. Additionally, teachers and administrators, as public servants, are subject to strict anti-corruption laws.

D4 – Freedom of Expression in Private Life (4/4)
Individuals can generally speak freely in private conversations. However, South Korea's robust surveillance infrastructure—such as the NIS's authority to monitor private communications—raises concerns. Pro–North Korea expressions may be punished under the NSL, and in 2023, the Constitutional Court upheld the NSL's provisions banning "anti-state" activities as constitutional.

4.5. Democracy and Freedom Status According to Freedom House Data: North Korea Overview

North Korea is an authoritarian regime governed by a single party and a hereditary leadership system. The country maintains a widespread surveillance apparatus under absolute state control. Arbitrary arrests and detentions are common, and punishments—particularly those based on political grounds—can be extremely severe.

The government continues to operate a system of closed camps where political prisoners are subjected to mistreatment, forced labor, starvation, and torture. This environment reveals a picture of systematic violations of fundamental human rights.

Criterion Code	Criterion Title	Skor (0-4)
A1	**Freedom and fairness of national elections**	**0**
A2	**Political pluralism and participation**	**0**
A3	**Barriers to remaining in power**	**0**
B1	**Right to participate in the political process**	**0**
B2	**Equal political rights**	**0**
B3	**Participation of minorities in political life**	**0**
D1	**Media freedom**	**0**
D2	**Freedom of religion**	**0**
D3	**Academic freedom**	**0**
D4	**Freedom of expression**	**0**

Table 2. North Korea's Political Participation and Freedom of Expression and Thought Scores According to Freedom House Criteria:

According to Table 2, North Korea demonstrates an extremely poor performance in the areas of political rights and civil liberties. In the Freedom House assessment, the country received a score of "0" in almost all categories, clearly reflecting its authoritarian system of governance. Only in a few areas are minimal rights scored with a "1"; however, these rights are severely restricted in practice. This situation illustrates the systematic suppression of fundamental freedoms.

4.6. Comprehensive Evaluation of Political and Social Freedoms in North Korea: Freedom House Perspective

A. Political Rights – Electoral Process

A1 – Executive Election Process (0/4)
In North Korea, the country's top political authority, Kim Jong-un, came to power in 2011 following the death of his father, Kim Jong-il. This leadership transition occurred not through an election, but through hereditary succession. In 2016, the State Affairs Commission (SAC) was established as the country's highest executive body, and Kim Jong-un was appointed as its chairman. In 2019, he was reappointed to the role by the unicameral Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) and given the title "Supreme Representative of All Korean People and Highest Leader of the Republic." However, none of these processes were conducted within a framework of free and fair elections consistent with international standards.

A2 – Legislative Election Process (0/4)
The Supreme People's Assembly (SPA), North Korea's legislative body, consists of 687 members who serve five-year terms. Elections are conducted under a system with no multi-party competition, where all candidates are pre-selected and voters have no genuine choice. Every candidate is nominated by the Democratic Front for the Reunification of the Fatherland (DFRF), led by the ruling Workers' Party of Korea (KWP). Voting is mandatory, and official turnout is reported to be nearly 100%. In the 2019 elections, all seats were filled by candidates approved by the regime, making the legislative process devoid of democratic legitimacy.

A3 – Electoral Laws and Administration (0/4)
Although elections in North Korea appear to operate within a legal framework, this system does not allow for real voter choice. Instead, elections serve as a tool to sustain regime continuity and control the population. In practice, elections function more like an official census, with the government closely monitoring who participates and how they vote. Refusing to vote for a pre-determined candidate may be considered an act of treason, with serious consequences. As such, it is not possible for electoral laws to be implemented fairly or impartially.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation

B1-Freedom of Political Organization (0/4)
North Korea is, in practice, a single-party state. Only the Workers' Party of Korea (KWP) holds power. Smaller parties that exist legally operate under the DFRF and are subordinate to the KWP. Genuine political competition is impossible.

B2-Possibility of the Opposition Gaining Power (0/4)
Political opposition is prohibited and violently suppressed. Since the country's founding, the KWP and the Kim family have held unchallenged power. Change of power through elections is not possible.

B3-Influence from Outside the Political Sphere (0/4)
The political domain is entirely subject to Kim Jong-un's authority. Party purges, punishments for suspected disloyalty, and even executions prevent the free expression of political preferences.

B4-Representation of Diverse Groups (0/4)
Political representation of ethnic minorities, women, religious groups, and LGBT+ individuals is nearly non-existent. Women's presence in the legislature is symbolic, and independent representation is not allowed. The state does not even recognize the existence of LGBT+ individuals.

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1-Media Freedom (0/4)
There is no independent media in North Korea. All media outlets are state-controlled and subject to strict censorship. Televisions and radios are tuned only to state channels, and access to foreign broadcasts is illegal and punishable by severe penalties.

D2-Freedom of Religion and Belief (0/4)
Despite constitutional protections, religious freedom does not exist in practice. People of faith—especially Christians—face severe persecution, with thousands reportedly held in prison camps. Religious activity must be conducted in secret.

D3-Academic Freedom (0/4)
The education system is based on state propaganda. The curriculum is tightly controlled. Even individuals educated abroad remain under heavy surveillance and may be accused of disloyalty.

D4-Freedom of Expression (0/4)
Expressing personal opinions poses serious risks. The state monitors digital activity, and internet access is limited to elites, while the general population remains under intense surveillance. Even private conversations may be reported by informants.

5. DİSCUSSİON AND EVALUATİON

Although South Korea and North Korea share a common historical background, over time, they have evolved into two fundamentally divergent systems in terms of political structure, freedom of expression, and levels of political participation. This study compares the current status of both countries by examining the constitutional framework, institutional functioning, and public participation, while also utilizing the 2024 democracy and freedom indexes published by Freedom House.

The case of South Korea demonstrates the presence of a democratic system where multiparty elections are functional, executive and legislative bodies check and balance each other, and individuals can express diverse political opinions. Although security-oriented regulations such as the National Security Law impose certain limitations on freedoms, overall, political participation and freedom of expression have been institutionalized. Freedom House data confirms this by categorizing South Korea as a "Free" country.

In contrast, the example of North Korea illustrates how a totalitarian regime systematically suppresses political participation and freedom of expression. The country's consistently lowest scores across nearly all categories in the Freedom House assessment clearly reflect its authoritarian structure.

This comparison reveals a strong correlation between the level of democracy in a political regime and the extent of citizens' political and intellectual rights. In South Korea, freedom of expression and political participation have become institutional cornerstones of democratic legitimacy, while in North Korea, these concepts remain merely constitutional ideals and are reduced to instruments that serve the regime's ideological stability.

Ultimately, this stark contrast between democracy and totalitarianism on the Korean Peninsula represents not only two different systems of governance but also two opposing paradigms of the individual–state relationship. This situation highlights the necessity for political system analyses to be based not only on institutional structures but also on practical data regarding the implementation of rights and freedoms.

6. CONCLUSİON AND POLİCY RECOMMENDATİONS

This study has examined the political systems of South Korea and North Korea through a comparative lens focused on democracy, political participation, and freedom of expression, highlighting the sharp contrasts between the two regimes in terms of individual rights and political legitimacy.

The analysis demonstrates that democratic institutions can guarantee citizens' rights not only through their existence but also through their functionality. South Korea presents a strong example of democratic institutionalization, enabling citizens to participate in governance and express their views freely. However, it should not be overlooked that the system has occasionally been constrained by security-driven policies, especially in terms of freedom of expression. The National Security Law, in particular, has formed the basis for such limitations and can sometimes conflict with democratic norms.

Therefore, it would be appropriate for South Korea to review such regulations in order to deepen its democratization process and to adopt more inclusive policies to enhance the political representation of minority groups.

In the case of North Korea, the situation is far more rigid. Although political participation and freedom of expression may seem to be constitutionally recognized, the structural character of the regime renders the exercise of these rights virtually impossible. The consistently lowest scores in Freedom House evaluations across almost all criteria show that fundamental rights are systematically repressed in the country. The cult of leadership, single-party dominance, and mandatory ideological loyalty eliminate citizens' political subjectivity, and the public sphere is entirely controlled by the centralized authority.

In the face of this situation, the international community should not settle for mere criticism. It must take more constructive and determined steps to protect human rights, ensure information flow, and strengthen the connections between closed societies and the outside world.

In conclusion, the level of democracy in political systems is determined not just by constitutional norms but by how rights are actually implemented in practice. Independent and internationally recognized evaluation mechanisms such as Freedom House play an important role in monitoring this process. The Korean example strikingly demonstrates how these criteria serve as meaningful tools for comparison and under what conditions political freedoms can concretely be realized.

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A View of Agile Management: A Bibliometric Analysis

Çevik Yönetim Perspektifi: Bibliyometrik Bir Analiz

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Özet

Bu çalışma, çevik yönetimin modern bir yönetim yaklaşımı olarak örgütlerdeki rolünü ve literatürdeki konumunu incelemektedir. Çevik yönetim, kökenlerini yazılım geliştirme alanında 2001 yılında yayımlanan Agile Manifesto'dan almakla birlikte, günümüzde farklı sektörlere yayılmış ve stratejik bir yetkinlik olarak görülmeye başlanmıştır. Geleneksel yönetim yaklaşımlarının stabilite, hiyerarşik yapı ve katı planlama gibi özelliklerine karşılık, çevik yönetim; esneklik, hızlı adaptasyon ve sürekli iyileştirme ilkelerini öne çıkarmaktadır. Bu bağlamda çalışma, çevik yönetimin kavramsal temelleri, klasik yaklaşımlardan farkları, temel ilkeleri, örgütsel dönüşümle ilişkisi ve güncel literatürdeki eğilimleri tartışmaktadır. Ayrıca, bibliyometrik analizlerin işaret ettiği araştırma yönelimleri ele alınarak çevikliğin disiplinler arası etkisi vurgulanmaktadır. Çalışma, çevik yönetimi sadece bir proje yönetim aracı olarak değerlendirmek yerine aynı zamanda belirsizlik ve değişim ortamlarında örgütlere dayanıklılık ve sürdürülebilir rekabet avantajı sağlayan bir yönetim paradigması olarak ele almaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Örgütsel Çeviklik, Çevik Yönetim, Yönetim, Bibliyometrik

Abstract

This study delves into the significance of agile management as a modern managerial paradigm and its standing in the existing body of literature. Rooted in the Agile Manifesto of 2001 within the software development sector, agile management has since expanded its origins, manifesting as a strategic capability applicable across diverse industries. Unlike traditional management approaches, characterized by stability, hierarchical structures, and rigid planning, agile management prioritizes adaptability, rapid responsiveness, and ongoing improvement. This paper examines the conceptual foundations of agile management and delineates its differences from classical management frameworks. It explores core principles that define agile methodologies, their role in facilitating organizational transformation, and prevailing trends observed in the literature. Furthermore, bibliometric analyses are presented to illuminate emerging research directions and underline the interdisciplinary impact of agility. In conclusion, agile management should be regarded as a project-centric methodology and a comprehensive managerial paradigm enabling organizations to cultivate resilience and maintain a sustainable competitive edge in uncertain environments and rapid change.

Keywords: Agile management, Organizational agility, Management, Bibliometric.

1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations today must navigate a terrain that significantly alters traditional operational paradigms, particularly regarding volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA). The combination of global competition, digital transformation, and rapidly changing consumer expectations has made it increasingly challenging for traditional management models to provide sustainable solutions. The rigid hierarchical and bureaucratic structures that once provided stability have now become obstacles to adaptability and responsiveness. It is time to rethink our approach and embrace flexibility for a more dynamic future. As a result, there is a growing demand for new paradigms that enable organizations to thrive in rapidly changing environments. One of the most notable responses to these challenges is agile management.

Agile management emerged in the early 2000s in software development but has since spread to various industries. It emphasizes flexibility, collaboration, customer focus, and iterative learning. By viewing uncertainty as an opportunity, agile management enables organizations to innovate, adapt, and maintain a competitive advantage. Today, agility serves as a holistic framework for organizational transformation. Agile management is increasingly vital in today's fast-paced environment, driven by digital transformation. Emerging technologies like AI, big data, and cloud platforms have intensified the urgency for organizations to innovate swiftly and adapt to complex changes. Agile practices facilitate this by aligning technology with customer needs, minimizing risks, and speeding up time-to-market. Additionally, agile management fosters a shift in leadership and organizational culture from command-and-control to empowerment and shared responsibility.

The practice of agility has experienced rapid expansion, accompanied by a significant increase in the corresponding academic literature. Over the last decade, agile management has emerged as a central paradigm within management and organizational studies. The rapid evolution has catalyzed diverse research across various domains, including software engineering, healthcare, manufacturing, and public administration. However, the literature remains fragmented, with studies scattered across multiple disciplines and contexts. Consequently, there is a pressing need to systematically map, analyze, and synthesize these contributions to elucidate prevailing themes, identify research gaps, and uncover emerging trajectories.

This study intends to explore the conceptualization and evaluation of agile management within the framework of management studies in the social sciences. It aims to analyze the existing body of work to identify the significance and implications of agile methodologies in business contexts. The literature emphasizes the impact of agile practices on organizational performance and highlights their potential as effective instruments for navigating the complexities inherent in modern business environments. Bibliometric analysis offers a systematic approach to understanding the evolution of agile management. Analyzing publication patterns, citation networks, and thematic clusters, bibliometric methods provide valuable insights into the field's development, current state, and potential future directions. These approaches allow scholars to go beyond individual case studies and analyze broader trends in the global academic discourse. Therefore, bibliometric analysis is a methodological tool to position agile management within the larger context of management research.

The aim of this study is twofold. First, it explores agile management as a modern approach by analyzing its conceptual foundations, principles, and impact on organizational transformation. Second, it employs bibliometric analysis to evaluate the development of scholarly interest in agile management, identify dominant themes in the discourse, and suggest possible directions for future research. This paper enhances our understanding of agile management by combining theoretical discussion with systematic bibliometric evidence. It highlights its role as a transformative paradigm for organizations operating in uncertain and dynamic environments.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: A VIEW OF AGILE MANAGEMENT

2.1. Conceptualization and Historical Roots of Agile Management

In today's volatile and uncertain market conditions, organizations implementing agile management principles harness adaptability and responsiveness, gaining a significant competitive advantage. Agile management presents a robust approach that enhances flexibility within the business ecosystem. This methodology's extensive applicability and various benefits further highlight its critical role in modern organizational strategies. In contrast to traditional organizational structures, which often embody an inward focus marked by a fixed mindset and a tendency to protect existing advantages while prioritizing shareholder returns, agile frameworks encourage an outward orientation. These agile frameworks promote a growth mindset, aiming to generate new competitive advantages and create value for customers and employees. By integrating agile principles, organizations can innovate continuously and respond swiftly to market dynamics, ensuring sustainable success. Agile management is increasingly recognized as a transformative paradigm in contemporary organizational studies. Initially focused on software development, it has expanded into broader managerial contexts, promoting adaptability, collaboration, and ongoing value creation. Agile management is seen as a mindset and strategic orientation that promotes, rather than just a set of practices or tools (Conforto et al., 2014; Denning, 2018). Emerging as a response to classical management, agile management emphasizes feedback and innovation, aiming to meet customer needs (Rigby et al., 2018). Viewed through a historical lens, agility has expanded beyond software engineering, being embraced across various industries and evolving into a comprehensive managerial philosophy.

Its key feature is flexibility in uncertain environments, enabling rapid, adaptable decision-making. Interest in agile management has surged since 2010, linking it to innovation and resilience within managerial processes (Augustine et al., 2021). This approach redefines how firms coordinate, strategize, and create value, serving as a critique of classical management and responding to globalization and digitalization challenges (Peters, 2018; Rigby et al., 2020).

Agile management originated in the software development industry with the release of the Agile Manifesto in 2001. The manifesto addressed the shortcomings of the traditional waterfall model, which was rigid and struggled to keep up with changing customer needs (Dingsøyr et al., 2012). The Manifesto highlighted key values: individuals and interactions, working software, customer collaboration, and responsiveness to change. Over time, the scope of agility has extended beyond IT into various sectors, including healthcare, manufacturing, and education, evolving into a broader managerial philosophy centered on innovation, adaptability, and continuous learning (Conforto et al., 2016; Denning, 2018). Initially a response to vertical hierarchies and heavy documentation, the Agile Manifesto has fostered rapid decision-making and execution across various industries since 2010 (Schuster & Sutherland, 2012; Dikert et al., 2016; McKinsey & Company, 2018).

In summary, agile management has evolved into a robust managerial philosophy and framework to optimize flexibility and adaptability in rapidly changing business landscapes. The fundamental principles of agile management include a strong focus on customer satisfaction, a proactive approach to change, a commitment to continuous improvement, and the promotion of collaborative teamwork (Beck et. al., 2001). Organizations that integrate agile management principles tend to be future-oriented, responsive to external shifts and opportunities, and driven by outcomes that deliver tangible solutions for their customers. This agility enhances operational efficiency and fosters innovation and resilience in uncertainty.

2.1.1. Distinctions from Classical Management Approaches

Classical management approaches, rooted in Taylorism and Weberian bureaucracy, prioritized efficiency, predictability, and hierarchical structures. While effective in stable environments, these principles often struggle in today's volatile and complex business contexts (Birkinshaw, 2018). Agile management fundamentally differs from traditional approaches, emphasizing flat organizational structures, iterative planning, and decentralized decision-making. Rather than relying on rigid long-term strategies, agile organizations favor short planning cycles, feedback loops, and the flexibility to respond

to emerging challenges (Rigby, Sutherland, & Noble, 2018). Moreover, leadership shifts from a command-and-control model to one focused on facilitation and empowerment. This allows organizations to remain resilient and continuously adapt to changing market conditions.

Agile management represents a significant shift from traditional management theories that shaped the twentieth century. Classical approaches focused on strict managerial control, high efficiency, bureaucratic stability, and rigorous oversight. In earlier periods, when historical changes occurred more slowly and information was limited, organizations could succeed using these methods. However, in today's rapidly changing environment, the rigid managerial structures deeply rooted in our economic systems are gradually being replaced (Highsmith, 2013). The current era calls for embracing the advantages of agile management, highlighting the need for quick adaptation to change, fostering collaboration, and encouraging continuous learning and development (Denning, 2019).

2.1.2. Bureaucratic vs. Flat Structures

Classical management systems, such as Max Weber's, emphasize hierarchical authority and centralized management, which can struggle with change (Koppman, 2016). In contrast, agile management fosters team autonomy and encourages horizontal organization. This shift leads to flatter, network-based organizational structures, enhancing transparency and speeding up decision-making processes. Research indicates that these agile structures are particularly effective in fast-changing industries (e.g., health, IT, education, and automotive), where speed and collaboration are crucial (Birkinshaw & Gibson, 2019).

2.1.3. Rapid Adaptation and Managing Uncertainty

One of the most significant contributions of agile management is its capacity to function effectively in VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous) environments. Unlike classical management models, which perceive unpredictability as a risk to be minimized, agile management incorporates uncertainty as a natural condition. It views it as an opportunity for experimentation and growth (Denning, 2018).

Empirical studies indicate that agile practices succeed in perceiving emerging opportunities and threats in the environment, responding rapidly to change, and converting a wide range of challenges into innovation. They transform uncertainty from a daunting threat into an advantage for strategic action. They also enable firms to secure sustainable competitive advantage during crisis periods characterized by disruption (Mergel, 2016; Teece, Peteraf, & Leih, 2016).

One of the most salient features distinguishing agile management from earlier management theories is its ability to succeed under conditions of uncertainty. Empirical research shows that firms implementing agile management exhibit greater resilience and faster recovery during crises, and that they make better use of market feedback to develop new strategies (Gurbaxani & Dunkle, 2019). The philosophy of agile management views uncertainty not as a threat, but as an opportunity for progress and renewal. This perspective is particularly advantageous in digitalization processes where ambiguity and volatility prevail (Teece, Peteraf, & Leih, 2016). By turning adaptability and experimentation into organizational routines, agile management leverages uncertainty as a source of competitive advantage (Joiner, 2019).

2.1.4. Flexibility in Planning and Decision-Making

Planning is described as an indispensable management function for businesses. As part of a management strategy, planning processes also vary according to the form of management. Traditional planning methods rely on long-term forecasts, detailed upfront specifications, and processes that do not accommodate change. In traditional management processes, making forward-looking projections becomes difficult when volatility is present (Serrador & Pinto, 2015). In agile management, by contrast, planning is approached as an adaptable process characterized by short feedback cycles and adjustments in decision-making according to the situation. In the agile process, decision-making is decentralized, granting authority to work teams and managers while organizations aim to reduce delays and increase

responsiveness. This flexibility balances strategic organization and operational responsiveness (Conforto et al., 2014).

2.1.5. Transformation of Leadership Logic

The key difference between traditional and agile management lies in the approach to leadership. In traditional models, leadership is characterized by control mechanisms prioritizing supervision, compliance, and efficiency (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). In contrast, agile management promotes leadership that facilitates work, empowers team members, and encourages experimentation. Agile leaders function as coaches and mentors, helping to remove obstacles and enabling teams to take ownership of outcomes (Joiner, 2019).

2.2. Core Values and Principles of Agile Management

The philosophy of agile management is based on values and principles that distinguish it from traditional approaches. Articulated initially by software developers in the "Agile Manifesto", these principles have since been applied across various organizational contexts. Contemporary studies do not merely view these values as operational guidelines; instead, they see them as an integrated whole encompassing culture, strategy, and the processes used to implement those strategies (Rigby et al., 2020). Additionally, this body of work emphasizes the importance of flexibility within systems, collaboration among cross-functional teams, and the continuous creation of value. Together, these elements form the foundation of agile organizations.

2.2.1. Flexibility, Customer Orientation, and Continuous Improvement

One of the core principles of agile management is flexibility. Accordingly, agile management must focus on and meet customer expectations and needs. In traditional—i.e., classical—management theories, the customer is a passive recipient. However, what is required is to be flexible throughout the firm's life cycle and integrate customer input. In organizations that renew and transform themselves, continuous improvement encourages organizational learning and increases the capacity to implement strategy over time (Serrador & Pinto, 2015). Such flexibility is a technical advantage and a powerful strategy that delivers sustainable competitive advantage and value creation.

2.2.2. Cross-Functional Teams and Iterative Processes

Agile management emphasizes the importance of strong communication among experts from different specializations. It argues that a holistic decision-making mechanism renders decision processes more effective. In this way, a collective work environment and innovative ideas can develop (Paasivaara et al, 2018). Through sprints and iterative reviews, work teams can establish priorities, enabling them to address problems or requests without interruption. Iterations create a cadence within long planning cycles (Hoda, Noble, & Marshall, 2013).

2.2.3. Speed, Adaptation, and Value Creation

Speed is one of the foremost priorities today for both firms and consumers. In particular, technological change and transformation are highly likely to render markets volatile. Agile organizations retain the ability to pivot when necessary and, through short solution-development cycles, can rapidly create value (Conboy & Carroll, 2019). According to research, organizations that adopt agile practices shorten time-to-market, increase customer satisfaction, and strengthen sustainable competitive advantage (Denning, 2019). By strongly linking speed with adaptability and value creation, speed helps ensure that organizational efforts remain effective in uncertain markets (Rigby et al., 2020).

2.3. Organizational Transformation and Agile Management

There is a strong link between organizational transformation and agile management. Agile management catalyzes profound organizational transformation. Agility is not only about creating a project or adapting to changing conditions; it also contributes to the restructuring of cultures and

processes to meet the needs of the global economy (Denning, 2018). This transformation also leads to changes in strategic leadership and value creation (Rigby et al., 2018).

2.3.1. Link with Digital Transformation and Innovation

Driven by digital transformation and innovation, demand for agile management is rising. As industries adopt disruptive technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, and cloud computing into their business practices, the need for approaches that support rapid innovation and flexible adaptation is growing (Gurbaxani & Dunkle, 2019). A literature review shows that firms integrating agile practices into their digital strategies shorten time-to-market and attain superior innovation capacity (Teece, Peteraf & Leih, 2016). Agile practices—defined by iterative experimentation and feedback cycles—offer a natural fit for digital innovation initiatives. Furthermore, it is argued that organisations' quick adoption of emerging technologies enables them to meet customer expectations and minimise the risk of large-scale failures.

2.3.2. Effects on Organizational Culture and Structure

Organizational transformation under agility requires significant cultural realignment. Traditional cultures grounded in control and predictability are replaced with values of collaboration, openness, and trust. Agile cultures emphasize psychological safety, continuous learning, and shared accountability (Denning, 2019). Structurally, transformation involves flattening hierarchies, empowering autonomous teams, and decentralizing decision-making (Paasivaara et al., 2018). Such structural changes increase transparency, facilitate faster environmental response, and foster stronger cross-functional collaboration. In tandem with these changes, it is also necessary to explain the competitive implications of the VRIO scale: V (Valuable)—speed, customer alignment, and the resulting quality directly create value; R (Rare)—a guided learning culture and well-functioning cross-functional teams generate advantage; I (Inimitable)—when team cadence, team-specific behavioral patterns, and data practices become organizational routines, they are difficult for rivals to imitate; and O (Organized)—clarifying roles and authorities and activating a facilitative leadership role enable the firm to capture this value, thereby increasing firm value.

2.4. Agile Management in Contemporary Literature

Agile management has transformed from a software engineering model to a methodology in managerial and organisational studies. Particularly after 2010, it has frequently been addressed in innovation, culture, strategy, and governance (Conboy & Carroll, 2019). In cultures prioritising innovation, agility offers both time and efficiency benefits. Decision-making processes accelerate, and internal communication becomes more effective. The transformation of agility from software engineering into a management strategy has become a driving force in competitive environments. Examining both national and international literature reveals the limitations of agile management. Specifically, its implementation can be challenging in terms of scaling, achieving cultural alignment, or managing budget costs (Denning, 2018).

2.4.1. Trends Highlighted by Bibliometric Analyses

In recent years, particularly within the framework of bibliometric analyses, it has been observed that research has increased steadily over the last decade. In clusters of academic studies, topics integrated into various fields—such as leadership agility, agile management systems, and digital transformation—have come to the forefront (Conforto et al., 2016). Earlier bibliometric research primarily centered on software engineering; however, recent studies are increasingly being conducted across diverse fields such as healthcare, the public sector, and manufacturing (Stettina & Hörz, 2015). These findings also reveal the fragmentation among sectors described as multidisciplinary, thereby pointing to the need for conceptual integration (Foschiani, Röber & Oesterle, 2021).

2.4.2. Agile Management's Growing Role Across Domains

There are several sectors to which agile management has spread beyond software engineering. The first of these is the healthcare field, which has developed significantly. During the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2019, the capacity for rapid response to crises increased notably. A similar process has also taken place in the public sector. In the public domain, the growing importance of the principle of transparency, accountability, and the ability to respond quickly to problems or demands has all been observed to improve through agile management (Mergel, 2016). In manufacturing and education, agile management has contributed to fostering innovation, reducing complexity, and enhancing the capacity for alignment between organizations and stakeholders (Paasivaara et al., 2018). However, while cross-sectoral applications enhance adaptability, attention has also been drawn to the risks of superficial implementation arising from organizational inertia.

2.4.3. Scholarly Debates and Future Directions

Although agile management has gained popularity recently, it remains a contested issue within academic circles. Most criticisms emphasize that organizations have not sufficiently internalized the agile management approach, adopting it only superficially or even symbolically. This is because, unless agile management is embraced across the entire organization, it cannot deliver the intended benefits (Rigby, Elk & Berez, 2020). When large-scale transformation is sought within organizations, problems related to leadership and leadership alignment, and the inadequacy of existing governance mechanisms, constitute barriers to sustaining agility (Dikert, Paasivaara & Lassenius, 2016). Looking toward the future, agile management increasingly focuses on planning by associating itself with themes such as sustainability, organizational resilience, and ethical governance (Joiner, 2019). While bibliometric studies in the literature show that agility will continue to spread across disciplines, scholars highlight the necessity of ensuring sectoral compatibility. In other words, management approaches that disregard sector-specific contexts will remain confined to theoretical discussions in the literature and will not be able to generate practical applications (Conboy & Carroll, 2019).

3. BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

An in-depth analysis of the distribution chart (refer to Fig. 1), categorized by Web of Science, reveals a prominent concentration of articles within the "Management" field. This indicates that project management and organizational processes are predominantly addressed in these studies, highlighting the critical role these areas play in contemporary research. The "Business" category closely follows the one, which illustrates the substantial overlap between business-oriented research and management disciplines, underscoring the interconnectedness of these fields.

Figure 1: Distribution of Studies by WOS Categories

Source:https://a8f59890210bb2a36cc265c34c80a801c14e01d5.vetisonline.com/wos/woscc/analyze-results/a920abc5-28dc-498a-94b3-9b33ea896521-0175e7879b

In addition, the distribution chart (refer to Fig.1) reflects a robust representation of computer science-related categories, particularly in specialized areas such as "Computer Science Software Engineering," "Computer Science Information Systems," and "Computer Science Theory Methods." These subfields indicate a significant emphasis on technical aspects, contributing to advancing knowledge in these domains. Moreover, other disciplines, including information science, engineering, and operations research, are represented but to a lesser extent, demonstrating the interdisciplinary nature of this research landscape. Notably, there is a strong focus on technology management, software engineering, and information systems, revealing the intricate interplay between management practices and technological innovation.

The field is predominantly approached from a management and business perspective while seamlessly integrating vital components from technology and computer science. This results in a rich tapestry of interdisciplinary studies that address contemporary challenges and advancements.
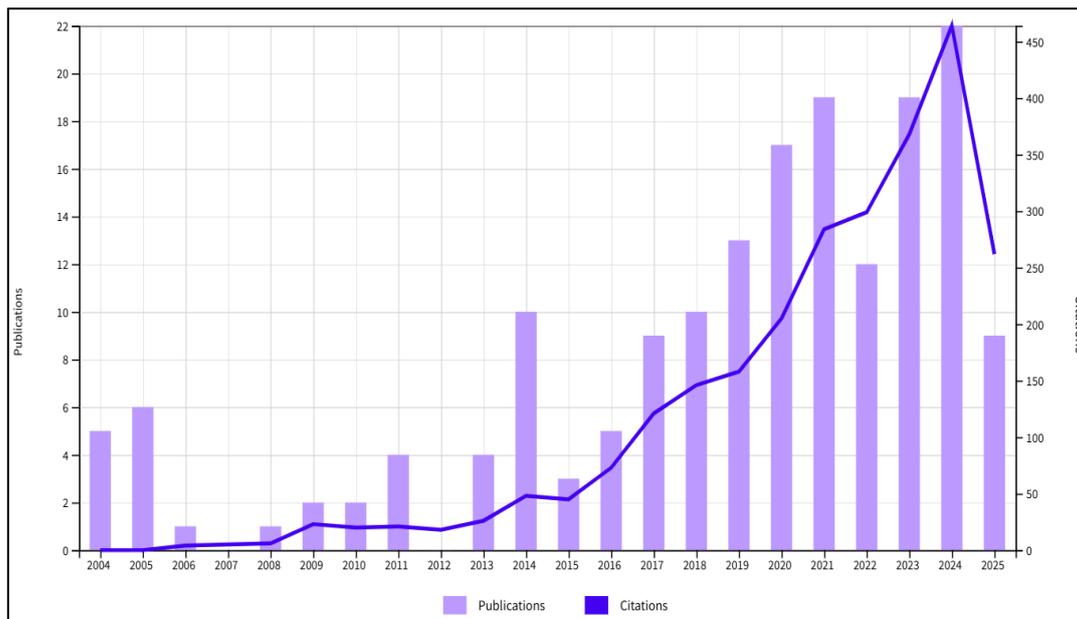
Figure 2: Number of Publications and Citations

Source:https://a8f59890210bb2a36cc265c34c80a801c14e01d5.vetisonline.com/wos/woscc/citation-report/a920abc5-28dc-498a-94b3-9b33ea896521-0175e7879b (E.T. 26.08.2025)

This graph (refer to Fig.2) shows trends in the number of publications (bars) and citations (lines) over the years. While the number of publications remained relatively low and fluctuating between 2004 and 2010, a significant increase was observed from 2011 onwards, particularly in 2014 and beyond, reaching its peak in 2024 (22 publications and 464 citations). The number of citations has also increased over time, peaking in 2024. This demonstrates a significant academic impact and visibility of recent studies, highlighting a growing interest and emphasis within the field. Additionally, one could assert that the surge in the volume of publications corresponds with an uptick in citation rates; as the number of published works expands, so does the frequency with which others reference these studies. This dynamic reflects the lively discourse within the discipline and underscores the relevance and importance of ongoing research contributions. In contrast, the earliest publication recorded in the database is titled

"Agile Project Management," which was authored by Maurer, F., Cohn, M., Griffiths, M., Highsmith, J., Schwaber, K., Kruchten, P. It was presented at the 4th Conference on Extreme Programming and Agile Methods (XP Agile Universe 2004) in 2004.

Table 1. Most Cited Academic Studies

Bibliographic Records	*Citations*
Conforto, E. C., Salum, F., Amaral, D. C., da Silva, S. L., & de Almeida, L. F. M. (2014). Can agile project management be adopted by industries other than software development? *Project Management Journal, 45*(3), 21–34.	192
Hoda, R., & Murugesan, L. K. (2016). Multi-level agile project management challenges: A self-organizing team perspective. *Journal of Systems and Software, 117*, 245–257.	139
Fernandez, D. J., & Fernandez, J. D. (2008). Agile project management: Agilism versus traditional approaches. *Journal of Computer Information Systems, 49*(2), 10–17.	135
Cooper, R. G., & Sommer, A. F. (2018). Agile-Stage-Gate for manufacturers: Changing the way new products are developed. *Research-Technology Management, 61*(2), 17–26.	115
Augustine, S., Payne, B., Sencindiver, F., & Woodcock, S. (2005). Agile project management: Steering from the edges. *Communications of the ACM, 48*(12), 85–89.	109

Source:https://a8f59890210bb2a36cc265c34c80a801c14e01d5.vetisonline.com/wos/woscc/citation-report/a920abc5-28dc-498a-94b3-9b33ea896521-0175e7879b (E.T. 26.08.2025).

The author keyword Cloud (refer to Fig. 3) visually highlights the field's key concepts, showing that the terms "project management-51", "agile project management-39", "agile-39" are the most frequently emphasized and focused topics in research. Furthermore, terms such as "agile," "scrum," and "risk management" stand out as important subheadings within the context of agile management, demonstrating that the field's focus is on core components such as software development processes, agile methodologies, and risk management.

Figure 3: Author Keywords Word Cloud

Figure 4: Keywords Plus Word Cloud

The largest and most prominent word in the Keywords Plus word Cloud (refer to Fig. 4), "software development," demonstrates its centrality in this field. Subsequent concepts such as "model," "performance," "framework," "challenges," and "work" reveal that software development processes are focused on factors such as efficiency, structure, challenges, and workload. Furthermore, words like "success," "teams," "innovation," "leadership," and "governance" indicate that technical, managerial, and organizational factors are prioritized in software projects.
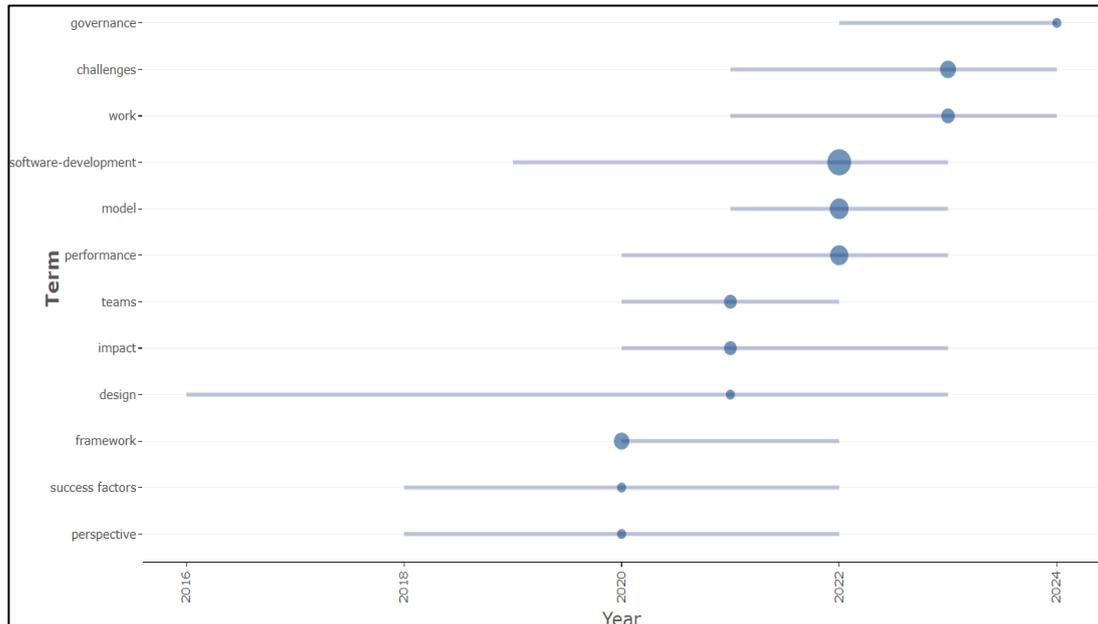

Figure 5: Trend Topics

The trend topics chart (refer to Fig. 5) illustrates the temporal distribution and density of prominent "trend topics" (key concepts) within the academic literature, categorized by year. Beginning in 2016, concepts such as "design," "framework," and "perspective" emerged prominently. Notably, after 2021, topics including "software development," "model," "performance," "challenges," and "governance" gained considerable attention, with "software development," particularly prevalent in 2022, becoming central to the field. This progression reflects an evolution in research interests from initial design concepts to a focus on software development processes and governance-related themes.

Furthermore, the recent intensification of concepts such as "governance" and "challenges" indicates that contemporary studies increasingly address strategic and organizational dimensions.
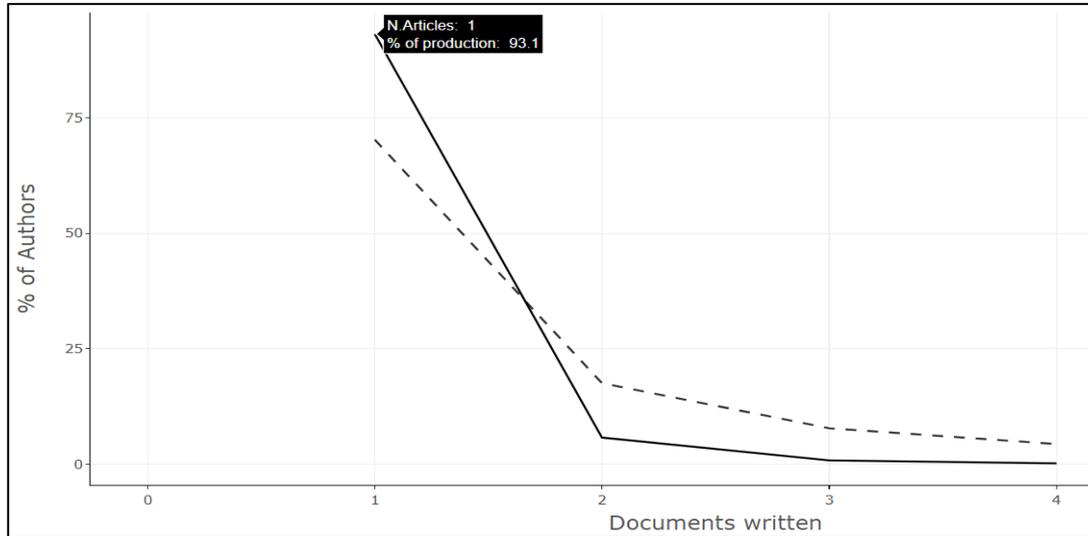

Figure 6: Lotka's Law

Lotka's Law is a fundamental bibliometric principle that explains the distribution of scientific productivity and author contributions within specific research domains. First introduced by Alfred J. Lotka in 1926, describes the relationship between the number of authors and their publication output. It indicates that a minority of researchers generate the majority of academic publications, while the vast majority contribute only a few. This manifests as a highly skewed distribution in academic productivity, underscoring the substantial impact that prolific authors have on the accumulation of scientific literature.

Extensively observed across various fields, Lotka's Law provides valuable insights into the dynamics of research and authorship patterns. It is often used in bibliometric analyses to assess research impact, optimize resource allocation, and strategize publication efforts. The implications of Lotka's Law highlight the necessity of acknowledging both high-output researchers and the more extensive cohort of authors who contribute infrequently, thereby enriching our understanding of scholarly communication (Huber, 2001). Specifically, this law states that the distribution of authorship is inversely proportional to the volume of publications produced, indicating that a majority of authors contribute only a limited number of articles, while a smaller fraction of authors accounts for a disproportionate share of total output (Aytaç et al., 2025). Data reveal that 93.1% of authors publish a single article, with the percentage of authors producing two articles plummeting to 5.8%. Furthermore, the incidence of authors with three publications is a mere 0.9%, and for those with four, it drops even lower to 0.2%. This is a typical example of Lotka's Law confirms that "few authors produce many, while many authors produce little" in scientific productivity (see Fig. 6 for visual representation).
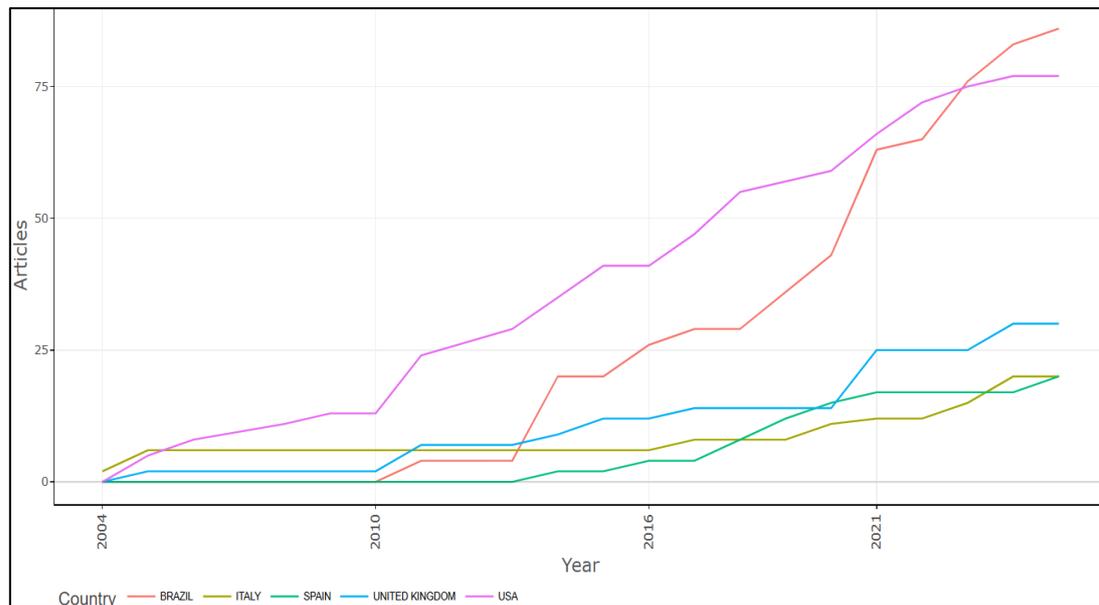
Figure 7: Countries' Publication Performance

The countries' publication performance chart (refer to Fig. 7) compares the academic publication output of five countries over time, from 2004 to 2024. The US (purple line) maintained its long-term leadership and showed a steady increase until 2020. However, Brazil (red line) surpassed the US, particularly after 2015, with a rapid increase, and has become the country with the most publications in recent years. Spain (blue line) showed a moderately steady increase, while the UK (yellow) and Italy (green) exhibited lower but more stable publication trends. The chart demonstrates that Brazil's rise and the US's long-term leadership shape academic production in this field.

Figure 8: Most Cited Countries

The chart of the countries most cited (refer to Fig. 8) shows the scientific impact of countries based on their total citation counts. The United States has the highest impact by far, with 807 citations, followed by Brazil (267), Spain (149), and New Zealand (139). Germany and Italy, with equal citations (122), demonstrate their influence in Europe, while Sweden, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and Portugal have made more limited but significant contributions. This distribution demonstrates that the Americas (especially the United States and Brazil) have a strong leadership role in the relevant academic field. In contrast to European countries have a balanced but secondary role.
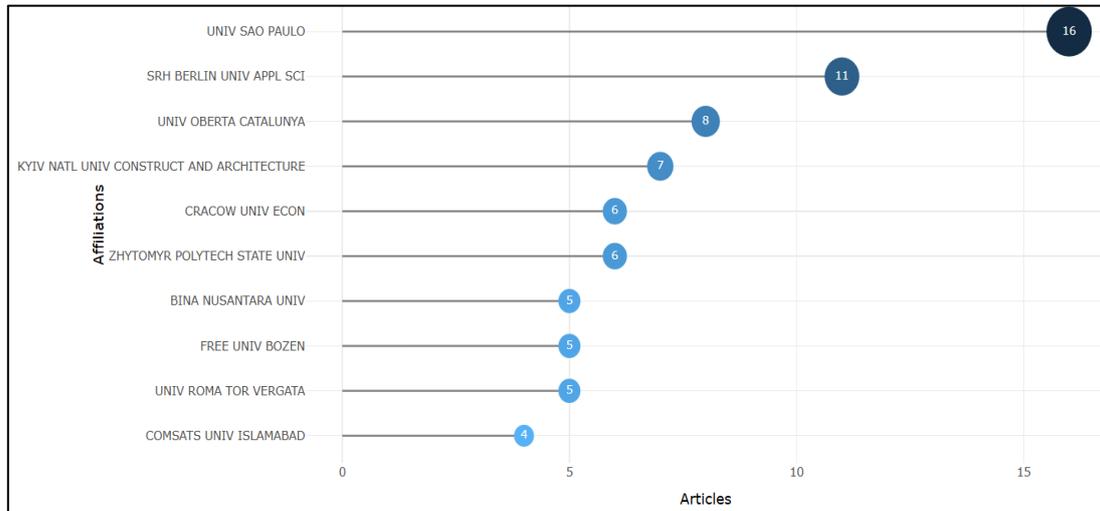
Figure 9: Most Productive Institutions

The chart (refer to Fig. 9) shows the most productive academic institutions by publication count. The University of São Paulo has the most publications, with 16 articles, and is clearly ahead. It is followed by SRH Berlin University of Applied Sciences (11 articles) and Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (8 articles). The top 10 universities include universities from Europe, South America, and Asia, demonstrating the high international academic interest in the subject. The universities' contributions demonstrate the existence of interdisciplinary and global collaborations.
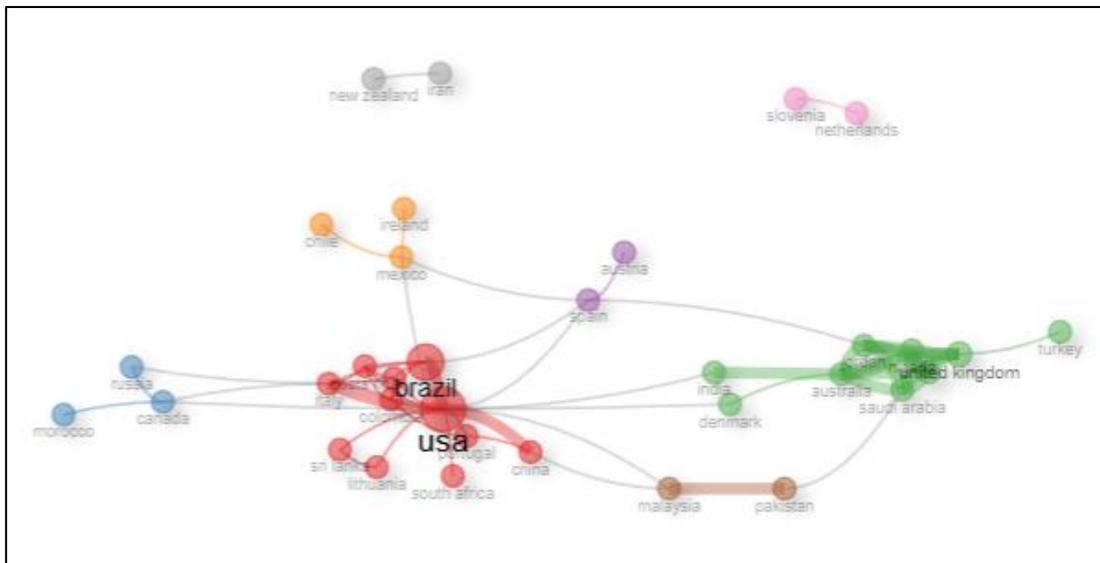
Figure 10: Countries Collaboration Network

The countries' collaboration network chart (refer to Fig. 10) shows the most central actors: The US and Brazil cluster (Red) have the largest nodes, meaning they engage in the most international cooperation. This cluster includes countries such as Italy, Portugal, Colombia, China, and South Africa, and appears to be linked to the US-Brazil axis. This suggests a cooperation structure centered primarily on the Americas. The UK-Focused Cluster (Green) includes countries such as the UK, India, Turkey, Australia, and Saudi Arabia. This cluster represents more European-Asian cooperation and has a high density of internal connections. The Iran-New Zealand Cluster (Gray): These countries, isolated from other clusters, appear to cooperate only with each other. Because they are disconnected, they have more

limited international interactions. Slovenia-Netherlands (Pink): Another small cooperation cluster, with weak external connections. Pakistan-Malaysia (Brown Cluster): These two countries, which have intense cooperation, work primarily among themselves and are less connected to other clusters. Other Connections (Orange, Blue, Purple): Countries such as Ireland, Mexico, and Chile have smaller, but potentially bridging roles. Countries like Russia, Morocco, and Canada appear more independent or less centrally linked.

Figure 11: Thematic Map

This thematic map (refer to Fig. 11) was created using thematic mapping, a method used in bibliometric analysis, and depicts clusters of concepts in two dimensions. The map is divided into four central regions:
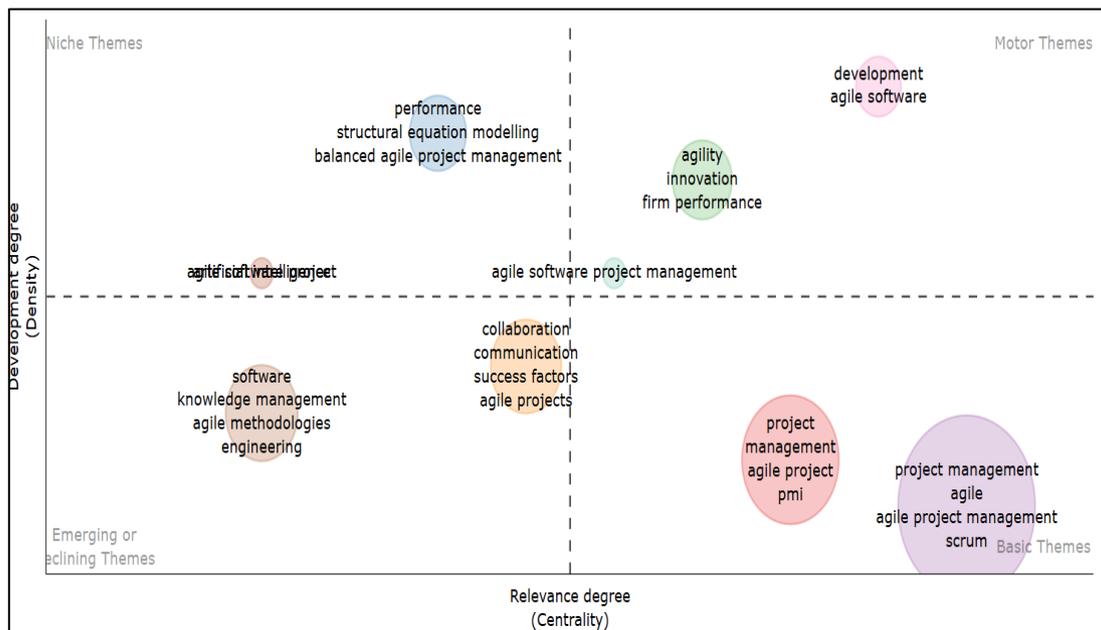
Upper Right Quadrant (Motor Themes): This region's themes are central and developed topics. In other words, they are the field's driving force (motor). Terms like "development" and "agile software" are here. This indicates that agile methods are a mature and central research topic in software development processes.

Upper Left Quadrant (Niche Themes): The themes in this region are highly developed but not central. The topics "performance," "structural equation modeling," and "balanced agile project management" are included here. These represent specific areas thoroughly studied methodologically, but less frequently covered in the general literature.

Lower Left Quadrant (Emerging or Declining Themes): These themes are non-central and underdeveloped. Terms such as "software," "knowledge management," "agile methodologies," and "engineering" are found here. These represent important themes from the past, but are currently declining, and new areas are still under development.

Lower Right Quadrant (Basic Themes): These central themes are underdeveloped. They can be considered fundamental building blocks for the literature. The topics "project management," "agile," "scrum," and "agile project management" are included here. Although these topics form the basis of many studies, their methodological or content depth is more limited.

4. CONCLUSION

Within the scope of this study, a bibliometric analysis was conducted to reveal the general trends, content focuses, and productivity structures of scientific publications related to the subject of

"Agile Management." Based on a search conducted in the title field of the Web of Science database as of 26.08.2025, 173 publications were included in the analysis, which was carried out using Bibliometrix, an R-based bibliometric analysis tool. The findings indicate that agile management has become a significant focus of academic attention, particularly since 2014, and that the number of publications and citations has remarkably increased until 2024. Most of the publications fall under "management" and "business," demonstrating that agile management is regarded not only as a technical application but also as an organizational, managerial, and strategic transformation process. In addition, a considerable number of studies are also situated within subfields of computer science, such as "computer science software engineering" and "information systems," reinforcing the interdisciplinary nature of the subject.

Keyword analyses revealed that concepts such as "agile," "agile management," "project management," "scrum," "software development," and "risk management" are the most frequently used and most prominent themes in the literature. In this context, agile management is an important tool for enhancing flexibility in software development processes, managing uncertainties, and strengthening customer orientation.

The trend topic analysis showed that the literature on agile management has undergone thematic transformation over the years. While concepts such as "design" and "framework" were prominent before and up to 2016, more comprehensive and strategic themes such as "governance," "challenges," and "software development" have gained prominence, especially after 2021. This tendency indicates that agile management has begun to be addressed not only at the operational but also at the strategic level.

The productivity analysis conducted within the framework of Lotka's Law revealed that most researchers publishing in agile management (93.1%) have contributed with only a single publication. This finding suggests that the field is still developing and that many researchers have approached the topic in a limited scope.

Brazil and the United States were clear leaders in terms of academic productivity. In particular, Brazil has recently become the most active producer in the field, with a rapid rise. At the same time, the United States occupies the position of the country with the most tremendous impact in terms of citations. The country collaboration network indicates strong collaboration among countries in the Americas, while European and Asian countries tend to operate more within regional clusters.

At the institutional level, the productivity of institutions such as the University of São Paulo, Germany, Spain, and China draws attention. This demonstrates that agile management has global academic relevance and has become a research priority across different geographies.

Finally, thematic map analysis revealed that studies in agile management are clustered around four main themes. Motor themes such as "agile software" and "development" are at the center of the field, while niche themes such as "balanced agile project management" and "structural equation modeling" provide a basis for detailed and advanced studies. Core themes such as "agile management" and "scrum" constitute the foundation of a broad literature, while emerging themes still carry research potential.

This analysis demonstrates that agile management transcends the confines of the software industry; it represents a multidimensional framework that can be applied across diverse fields, including organizational management, leadership, and innovation. The evolution of this discipline is anticipated to accelerate, especially as it intersects with advanced management paradigms such as strategic leadership, digital transformation, and artificial intelligence in management practices. In this context, prioritizing emerging themes, developing interdisciplinary perspectives, and creating structures conducive to international collaboration may serve as pivotal strategies that will enhance the scholarly discourse in the literature.

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ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Türkiye'nin 2017-2024 Yılları Arasındaki Demokrasi Süreci

Türkiye's Democracy Process Between 2017 And 2024

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Özet
Günümüzde en çok arzu edilen yönetim biçimi olan demokrasi, kökeni ekseninde tanımlandığında içerisinde halka dair doneler taşıyan ve özgürlüklere erişim noktasında çekirdek bir kavram statüsündedir. Demokrasi ile yönetilen ülkeler, yurttaşlarına çeşitli alanlarda belirli özgürlükler sağlar ve bu özgürlükler ülke içerisindeki iç çatışmaların ve haksızlıkların önlenmesi gayesinde önem arz eder. Ülkelerin özgürlük oranları bağlamında belli bir puan sistemi ile demokratikliklerine yorum getiren Freedom House, demokrasiye yönelik kabulleri bağlamında dikkat çeken bir sivil toplum kuruluşudur. Buna binaen Türkiye için yapmış olduğu incelemeler ve çıkarımlar, Türkiye'nin demokrasi geleneğini ve özgürlüklere vermiş olduğu önemin tarihsel süreçteki değişimlerini anlamak adına dikkate değerdir. Bu çalışmada Freedom House verileri ışığında Türkiye'nin 2017-2024 yılları arasındaki demokratiklik puanları incelenerek, yaşanılan olayların, sivil özgürlüklerden olan ifade ve inanç özgürlüğü özelinde nasıl bir etki yarattığı ve Freedom House verileri açısından demokrasiye nasıl etki ettiğini ortaya koymak amaçlanmıştır. Bu doğrultuda demokrasi, sivil haklar, özgürlükler kavramları incelenecektir.
Anahtar Kelimeler: Demokrasi, İfade Ve İnanç Özgürlüğü, Freedom House, Türkiye

Abstract
Democracy, which is the most desired form of government today, has the status of a core concept in terms of access to freedoms, which, when defined in terms of its origins, carries public elements within it. Countries governed by democracy provide their citizens with certain freedoms in various fields and these freedoms are important in preventing internal conflicts and injustices within the country. Freedom House, which comments on the democracy of countries with a certain point system in the context of their freedom rates, is a non-governmental organization that draws attention in the context of its acceptance of democracy. Accordingly, its analysis and conclusions for Turkey are noteworthy for understanding Turkey's democratic tradition and the changes in the importance it attaches to freedoms in the historical process.
This study aims to analyze Turkey's democratic scores between 2017 and 2024 in the light of Freedom House data and to reveal how the events that have taken place have affected freedom of expression and freedom of belief, which are among civil liberties, and how they have affected democracy in terms of Freedom House data. In this direction, the concepts of democracy, civil rights and freedoms will be analyzed.
Keywords: Democracy, Freedom of Expression and Belief, Freedom House, Türkiye

1. INTRODUCTION

Democracy, which prioritizes the political participation of the people, fundamental rights and freedoms, the subordination of power to the people and political pluralism, is a constitutional concept in many countries today. However, it is always open to debate whether every country that fulfills these principles is democratic or not. Although constitutionally guaranteed, in the practices of some countries these principles do not proceed in parallel with the constitution. We can say that democracy, which is effectively practiced in most of the countries governed within the framework of universal rules of law, has sort of existed with these rules. These rights, which guarantee the freedom, equality and security of the individual in every sense, cannot be ignored in terms of their contribution to democracy Beetham and Boyle, 1998: 1).

Turkey is a country that shows variability in terms of freedoms in parallel with the events in terms of its level of development and political and social mobility. It would not be correct to say that Turkey, which is governed by a president elected by the people, is not governed by democracy. In this respect, it can be interpreted that Turkey is eclectically committed to democratic issues. What adds originality to the study is the examination of the impact of the scores given to civil rights and freedoms by Freedom House between 2017 and 2024 on the democratic rate in a holistic sense. The reason for examining civil rights and freedoms in particular is that the social and political events that the country has experienced largely determine democracy. Basically, the implementation of states of emergency since the coup d'état on July 15, 2016 and the transition to the presidential government system with the regime change in 2017 can be considered a milestone in terms of the democratic ratios of Freedom House data. In this study, it is aimed to examine the democratic ratios given by Freedom House to Turkey between 2017 and 2024 in the context of freedom of expression and freedom of belief, which are under the heading of civil liberties, and to reveal the effects of political and social events on these freedoms, and at the same time to examine the arguments on the basis of which Turkey, which was considered partially free in 2017, fell to the status of an unfree country in the following years. The main reason for choosing 2017 as the starting point is that a fundamental change in Turkey's political regime began to institutionalize from this date onwards. In particular, the state of emergency regime imposed after the coup attempt on July 15, 2016, created significant restrictions on fundamental rights and freedoms. The transition to the presidential system of government with the constitutional referendum held in 2017 expanded the powers of the executive branch, directly affecting democratic checks and balances. Therefore, 2017 represents a turning point in understanding the trajectory of Turkey's level of democracy. It also provides a suitable starting point for evaluating the institutional and political developments that emerged in subsequent years. In this context, firstly, the concept of democracy will be mentioned, then the working system of Freedom House and its assumptions about democracy, which are in line with universal rules of law, will be mentioned, and the effects of Turkey's general atmosphere between the relevant years, which is the main subject of examination, on the freedom of expression and belief, which are included in subparagraph D under the heading of civil rights, will be discussed. On the basis of these discussions, it would be appropriate to review the literature on the theoretical definitions of democracy and the people, as well as the basic characteristics of authoritarian and totalitarian systems in order to ensure the integrity of the subject. Historical and descriptive research techniques were used in the study and data analysis was conducted.

2. DEMOCRACY

The concept of democracy, which is based on the principle of government of the people by the people for the people, has been subjected to different definitions by many thinkers throughout the historical process. Democracy, an ancient Greek word, is a concept that emerged with the merger of the words demos (people) and Kratos (administration) and means popular rule (Heywood, 201: 102; Gökçe, 2021: 59). In other systems of government, people become leaders through birth, lottery, wealth, violence, co-optation, knowledge, appointment, or examination, whereas in democracy, the main

method is for leaders to be elected by the people they will govern through elections (Huntington, 1996: 4). The most important issue in democracies is that the government is in the hands of the people. This can only be achieved by a government elected by the people through regular and fair elections. The concept of the people, which defines all people living in the country, is a human community where everyone has equal rights regardless of differences such as color, language, religion, gender, ancestry and economic power. In addition, the concepts of equality and rights are two important concepts that complement the word democracy. Democracy requires equal representation and participation of all segments of society. In order to ensure this participation, political elections should be held regularly and fairly, as mentioned above, and at the same time, people should not face harsh obstacles in exercising their right to freedom of expression. (Gökçe and Aksu, 2020: 195; Ateş, 1994: 9-11; Gökçe, 2013: 66). Otherwise, the functioning of democracy will be interrupted and the country's regime will inevitably become authoritarian. Democracy and elections, a concept that has been discussed since the ancient Greek period, began to be held with unequal and limited participation, far from fair understanding, as far as possible not to the detriment of the ruler. The fact that slaves and women did not have the right to vote in ancient Greece, when the slavery system was still in place, was in a position that was not equivalent to the definitions of democracy by historians and thinkers close to the present day. However, the emergence of concepts such as equality, nation, participation and rights, which emerged as feudal societies entered a process of evolution in terms of governance and law by joining the developments in the world, is a valuable step in the context of moving democracy away from its initial definitions. While the concept of democracy was defined in the 18th and 19th centuries from a normative perspective such as "common good" and "general benefit," changes occurred in this perspective in the second half of the 20th century, and definitions emphasizing its analytical dimension began to dominate democracy studies (Beetham, 2014: 70; Özcan, 2022: 37). At this point, I find it necessary to mention some of the most well-known definitions of the concept of democracy, which has been subjected to many definitions.

Dahl, who prefers to explain democracy based on 5 criteria, defines the opportunities provided by democracy as effective participation in terms of taking the views of the individuals involved in politics, the right to vote with equal value and voting equality, the right to be informed about the final policy to be implemented, the right to have the last word on the agenda that makes their opinions on how they want the items to be put on the agenda valuable, and the involvement of adults who have the rights in these four items. He sees these opportunities as essential for members of society to have equal rights (Dahl, 2021: 47-48). At the same time, the regime Dahl calls polyarchic democracy shapes six institutions. These are: elected officials, free and fair elections, freedom of expression, alternative sources of information, organizational autonomy and inclusive citizenship. According to Dahl, a regime cannot be considered a democracy if it lacks any of these (Tilly, 2014: 27).

Touraine, on the other hand, does not define a government without political pluralism in which the rulers are not freely elected by the ruled as democratic. Especially if the voters have to choose between the oligarchy, the military and only two factions of the state, there can be no talk of democracy at all (Touraine, 1997: 17). Touraine, like Dahl, speaks of the complementary dimensions of democracy, which he characterizes in three ways: respect for fundamental rights, citizenship and the representativeness of rulers. The interdependence between these three concepts constitutes democracy (Touraine, 1997: 45).

For Lijphart, who theoretically supports democratic governance within the framework of the majoritarian model of democracy, democracy is a form of government by and for the people that is compatible with the wishes of the majority and governed by the majority, as opposed to government by and for the people that responds to the wishes of the minority and governed by the minority. As an equivalent interpretation, Lijphart adds to his definition that the rule of the majority is more democratic than the rule of the minority and sustainable without the danger of authority (Lijphart, 2024: 16).

Finally, Charles Tilly, in defining democracy, mentions four dimensions, focusing on democratization and the reversal of democracy. These dimensions are: Breadth, equality, protection and mutual binding. While he considers the movement of these four elements towards the upper ends as democratization, he defines the movement towards the lower ends as the reversal of democracy (Tilly, 2014: 35).

Considering the diversity of definitions of democracy, it can be said that there is no common definition of this concept. Liberal, socialist, communist, conservative and communist ideas list the virtues of democracy and defend their own understanding of democracy. Therefore, the democratic tradition does not offer a single ideal of governance for the people, but it is also an area of debate on how the people's governance will be realized (Nodia, 1993: 40; Heywood, 2012: 273; Barry, 2018: 425).

In addition to the diversity of conceptions of democracy, it is noteworthy to mention the definition of democracy and the scoring system of Freedom House, which scores democracy within the framework of certain elements, for the analysis of Turkey.

3. FREEDOM HOUSE

Beyond these definitions of democracy, Freedom House, which proceeds with a point system within the framework of certain assumptions based on the forms of governance of countries, takes into account the events that take place in countries every year and concludes the results with a percentage rate as free, partially free and not free. It would not be wrong to define free countries as democratic, partly free countries as limited democratic and not free countries as non-democratic. After the Second World War, with the spread of democracy on a global scale, similar to these classifications, we see regimes classified as full democracies, imperfect democracies, hybrid regimes and authoritarian regimes. Schedler, Levitsky & Way, and Diamond, who are among the most important names in political regime studies and published three articles under the heading "Elections without Democracy" in the Journal of Democracy in 2002, classified hybrid regimes as a subtype of authoritarian regimes. In these articles, Schedler defined hybrid regimes as electoral authoritarian regimes, while Levitsky and Way defined them as competitive authoritarian regimes. Diamond, on the other hand, sought to identify the distinguishing features between electoral democracies and electoral authoritarian regimes (Aksu, 2021: 2; Özcan, 2022: 42–43; Begtimur, 2025; 1696).

In the context of the process of transition to democracy, it is possible to say that countries are analyzed in three classes: countries in transition to democracy, countries that consolidate and strengthen their democracy not only as a "political regime" but also as a "political culture" and countries that deepen their democracy as a way of social life (Kemahlıoğlu, Keyman, 2011: 4).

It would not be wrong to say that Freedom House, which acts in line with universal legal principles and an understanding of freedom and democracy, considers the results mentioned above to be equivalent to three forms of government. This situation is summarized in Table 1 below.

Tablo 1 The relationship between freedom and democracy, according to Freedom House

Free	Democratic
Partly Free	Authoritarian
Not Free	Totalitarian

Before addressing the working system of Freedom House and the elements of democratic understanding, it would be more useful to explain the above forms of state in order to explain the original part of the study in the following pages.

When defining democratic countries, it is very likely to see a government elected by the people and fair, regular and egalitarian elections. To paraphrase Tilly, "A regime is democratic insofar as the political relations between the state and its citizens involve broad, equal, protected and mutually binding consultation" (Tilly, 2014: 104). Let us expand on this definition. The elimination of class imbalances, where all segments of the population are exposed to state policies and, more positively, have rights (especially the right to vote), is fundamental to the governance of a democratic country. It would not be wrong to consider the principle of equality as another fundamental characteristic of democracy. Beyond the equality between citizens, the notion of equality is important in the sense that those who are later naturalized citizens have the same rights as those who were born citizens. Although the notion of protection here is linked to statism, it actually emphasizes equality. He mentions the importance of protecting the holistic structure of the state and states that in order to ensure this protection, all citizens should be evaluated under the same criminal responsibility and should be free from favoritist policies. Finally, Tilly mentions the principle of mutual bindingness, which prevents the rulers from making decisions on their own, thus putting a big stone in front of the transformation into authoritarian and totalitarian systems and limiting the effectiveness of the ruler's domination. In the context of this principle, citizens can easily communicate their demands, requests and complaints to the rulers, in other words, it is a principle that enables them to overcome the obstacles to their relations with the ruler due to the bureaucrat accumulation in between. In addition, Dahl's argument is also indispensable for democracy. By defining a participatory, pluralistic and competitive democracy, he did not only focus on the freedom of elections, but also placed freedom of expression, freedom of association and access to information in a valuable place for democracy.

Authoritarian systems are those that allow for a limited but unaccountable political pluralism, have a mindset that is unique to them rather than guiding, and do not make a concerted effort to involve individuals in political processes, or do not emphasize it at all unless it is in their own interest to do so. Based on the rule of a small group or a leader, these systems are based on the exercise of power within limits that are not well-defined in form, but in practice are quite predictable (Linz, 2008: 137).

Authoritarian systems, defined as a transitional administration in the context of the transformation of democratic regimes into non-democratic ones, may eclectically adhere to democratic elements. In these systems, where there are opposition parties to the ruling party, it is not very likely that opposition parties will come to power. There is a certain domination over the people, but in some cases there are also freedoms. In general terms, we see that the transition of various countries of the world to authoritarian and then totalitarian systems or the continuation of the authoritarian system depends on a state of emergency. For example, Ernst Fraenkel, in his book The Dual State, made inferences about the formation of the Nazi regime in Germany by analyzing the trial minutes of political trials. He cites the appointment of Hitler as Reich Chancellor on January 30, the declaration of a state of civil emergency contained in the decree law of February 28, 1933, and the signing of the Powers Act of March 2, 1933 as the beginning of authoritarianism (Fraenkel, 2020: 36). He proves that a form of state shifting towards totalitarianism emerged in the aftermath and that the temporary martial law and state of emergency regimes gradually turned into permanent ones. Fraenkel then states that the state is divided into two, the state of norms and the state of precaution, and explains that the reason for this is the continuity of the regime throughout the book.

Totalitarian systems, on the other hand, are systems of domination that do not allow for even a limited political majority and are not based on an electoral process. In his book, Linz, quoting Friedrich, emphasizes six features that distinguish totalitarian systems from heterocracies and autocracies. The first is the existence of a totalist ideology, which constitutes the root word of the regime type. The second is the existence of a single party under a single leader, the dictator, who is committed to this ideology; the third is a highly developed secret police and the possession of certain monopolies (communications, weapons, economic organizations) that embody the other three characteristics (Linz, 2008: 34).

Rather than defining totalitarian systems directly, Linz analyzed them in two stages: before totalitarianism and after totalitarianism. The Nazi and Soviet regimes, two of the most well-known totalitarian systems, did not come into existence as totalitarian systems. They were subjected to a transition process like the Nazi example in Fraenkel's book above. Pre-totalitarian authoritarian regimes operate semi-loyally to democracy, making tactical deals in order to gain the support of other parties and institutions. In post-totalitarian authoritarian regimes, on the other hand, totalitarian control was consolidated and maintained for a long time. However, this established regime has undergone a process of adaptation and transformation under the influence of economic and social variables. In other words, what Linz means by the aftermath of totalitarianism is the evolution of the regime into a more participatory democracy with the wave of change and democracy in the world (Özbudun, 2011: 33).

Following the definitions of democracy, authoritarian system and totalitarian system, it is essential to make a detailed analysis of Freedom House's working system and scoring criteria. Based on the above definitions of democracy, we can summarize that democratic systems are those that allow the free expression of political preferences based on the freedoms of association, information and communication in order to realize free competition for leaders (Linz, 2008: 23). Freedom House's criteria are in line with these and the criteria mentioned above. The methodology of the report is largely derived from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. This organization, which argues that it is not enough for a country to be legally committed to democratic principles, conducts research on whether this is also the case in practice and obtains an output as a result of scoring. This scoring system works like this:

When Freedom House rates a country's democratic values, it bases its assessment on criteria such as a competitive multi-party political system, the right to vote for all adults, regular and reliable elections, and the ability of political parties to reach voters in a transparent manner (Duyar, 2022: 90). Freedom House's work is divided into two categories: political rights and civil liberties. The questions under these categories shed light on the fundamental issues facing countries (Becker & Vlad, 2015: 2). 10 political rights indicators and 15 civil liberties indicators in the form of questions about a country or region are scored on a scale of 0-4, with 0 representing the smallest degree of freedom and 4 representing the greatest degree of freedom. Questions on political rights are categorized into three sub-categories: 3 questions on the electoral process, 4 questions on political pluralism and participation and 4 questions on the functioning of government. Questions on civil liberties are divided into four sub-categories: 4 questions on freedom of expression and belief, 3 questions on associational and organizational rights, 4 questions on the rule of law and 4 questions on personal autonomy and individual rights. The maximum score for political rights is 40, while the maximum score for civil liberties is 60. The sum of these scores indicates how democratic a country is out of 100. In the end, the country is positioned in one of three statuses: free, partly free and not free (Freedom House, 2025). I stated at the beginning of the study that the original part of the study is the evolution of freedom of expression and freedom of belief in the context of the relevant years in Turkey, which is examined in Article D under the heading of civil liberties. Before moving on to this section, the questions addressed in Section D, the answers sought, and the criteria for freedom that are considered important are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2 Criteria considered when determining freedom scores for item D

D1	D2	D3	D4
Is there a free and independent media?	Are individuals free to practice and express their religious beliefs or non-beliefs publicly and privately?	Is there academic freedom and is the education system free from overarching political indoctrination?	Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive issues without fear of surveillance or reprisals?

I will examine these headings in the table above, starting in 2017 and extending to 2024 (including 2024). The methodology for this examination will be to compare each year with the previous year. While making comparisons, if there is no difference in the reasons for the questions and answers that received the same score in the previous year, they will not be mentioned again. Only Freedom House data will be analyzed from an objective point of view. The reason for using Freedom House data is that it is one of the most frequently used and long-standing data sets in democracy measurements. The organization's systematic scoring method, mentioned above, facilitates research by enabling comparisons of countries' democratic performance. However, Freedom House assessments have been criticized for adopting a Western-centric normative approach and sometimes relying on subjective interpretations. While this study is based on Freedom House data, it is important to link the findings with data from other indices such as V-Dem, Polity, and The Economist Intelligence Unit in order to increase their objectivity. The measurements of these indices, which are based on variables such as electoral processes, civil liberties, judicial independence, and political participation, generally correspond with Freedom House data. For example, while the aforementioned indices indicate that Turkey has shown a tendency toward authoritarianism since 2013, Freedom House data has also commented on Turkey's level of democracy with parallel explanations. This situation supports the credibility of Freedom House.

4. TURKEY ACCORDING TO FREEDOM HOUSE DATA

After the Second World War, a period of gross violations of human rights, important changes were made to protect human rights. States such as the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy and Japan firstly felt the need to regulate freedoms in their constitutions and especially to establish their guarantees, and then established Constitutional Courts to protect human rights against the law. With the strengthening of parliaments, constitutional courts, which aim to protect freedoms against the legislature, have also contributed to the transition to democracy and are equipped with duties and powers that will be effective in protecting fundamental rights and freedoms (Gökçe & Gölek, 2018: 135).

In the constitutions and laws of countries, citizens are granted political and civil rights. However, it is not possible to talk about democratic governance when these rights are not implemented effectively and fairly. In democratic countries, in addition to rights, freedoms and opportunities, citizens are granted freedoms such as freedom of belief and freedom of expression, and these freedoms are protected for the continuity of democracy. A democratic country ensures that its citizens fulfill their moral responsibilities. In order for an individual to have moral values and responsibilities, he/she needs to make decisions by exercising his/her right to free thinking, discussion and examination. In this respect, the freedoms of citizens have an important place in a democratic country to ensure continuity and order (Gökçe, 2013: 63). One of the important indicators taken into account by Freedom House, which measures the level of democracy of countries and proceeds with a scoring system, is civil rights and freedoms. Freedom of expression and freedom of belief, which have been most affected by the

political changes in Turkey, are among the factors that directly affect democracy. Freedom of expression is one of the areas considered problematic in Turkey. Between 2008 and 2010, problems in the area of media freedoms caused Turkey to decline in The Economist Entelligence Unit's (EUI) Democracy Index ranking in recent years (Kemahlıoğlu, Keyman, 2011: 7). Freedom of belief, as well as freedom of expression, is a much debated and problematic area in Turkey. Questions have been raised about whether religious groups are subject to pressure, how leaders are chosen, whether there is government interference in this context, and the limitation of religious education (Kemahlıoğlu, Keyman, 2011: 7). In the freedom analysis conducted by Freedom House, various questions are included under the heading of freedom of expression and belief, as mentioned above. It is possible to say that there have been no significant changes in the scores given from 2017 to 2024 in response to these questions. Turkey's decline from being rated as partially free by Freedom House in 2017 to being classified as not free in subsequent years is not merely a numerical change reflecting a decline in scores. It is a result of the institutional restructuring that emerged after the presidential system of government was introduced. The new system has significantly weakened the executive branch's control over the legislature and judiciary, leading to the erosion of the principle of separation of powers. At the same time, the concentration of media ownership in favor of pro-government groups has led to a narrowing of press freedom and restrictions on alternative sources of information. Finally, the weakening of judicial independence has led to questions about the principle of impartiality in judicial proceedings against opposition politicians, journalists, and academics. These institutional changes have had negative repercussions on Freedom House's assessment criteria, including freedom of expression, the rule of law, and accountability in governance, leading to Turkey's categorical decline. However, as mentioned, differences can be seen in the reasoning behind these ratings due to sudden political changes in Turkey. The changes and their justifications for the relevant years are as follows.

Table 3 Turkey's Democracy Performance According to Freedom House Data (2017-2024)

Year	Political Rights (0-40)	Civil Liberties (0-60)	Total (100)	Statü	Turning Point/Defining Event
2017	18	20	38	Partly free	State of Emergency after July 15, 2017 Constitutional Referendum
2018	16	16	32	Not free	Presidential Government System, Media Pressure
2019	15	16	31	Not free	Rector Appointments, Social Media Detentions
2020	16	16	32	Not free	RTÜK Influence, Wikipedia Ban Lifted
2021	16	16	32	Not free	Covid-19, Control of Information Flow, Karabakh Policy
2022	16	16	32	Not free	Bosphorus University Protests, Withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention
2023	16	16	32	Not free	Election Law Amendment, Social Media Law, Kavala and İmamoğlu Cases
2024	17	16	33	Not free	Censorship and Detentions Following the February 6 Earthquake

As seen in the table above, Turkey's democratic performance between 2017 and 2024 declined from partially free status in 2017 to not free status. This decline is closely linked to certain turning points. The 2017 constitutional referendum, which strengthened the executive branch, led to the breakdown of institutional balances and the weakening of the judiciary. In the following years, increased pressure on the media and restrictions on freedom of expression inevitably led to a decline in Turkey's

democracy scores. Even during the crisis caused by the February 6, 2023 earthquakes, the government appears to have imposed restrictions on the public's freedom of expression.

Figüre 1 Turkey's Freedom House Democracy Scores by Year
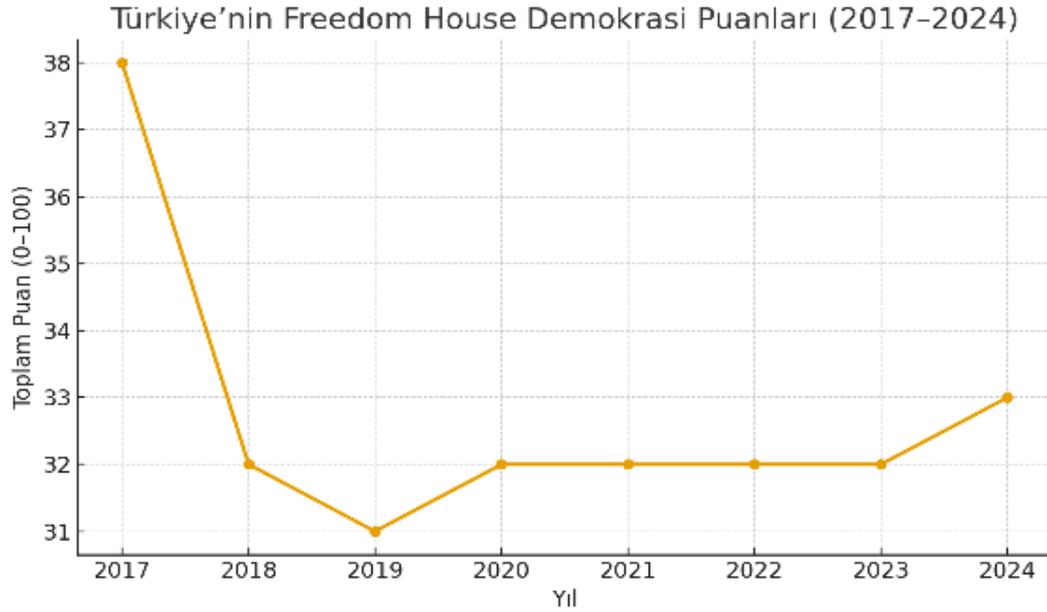
4.1. Turkey in 2017

In 2017, Turkey scored 18 points for political rights and 20 points for civil rights, and its freedom rate was 38%, placing it in the category of partly free countries. This was a year in which the effects of the coup attempt in July 2016 had begun and the state of emergency was also in effect. Since the 2017 Freedom House data does not have a score out of 4, it will be sufficient to consider the outputs of the researcher of the organization in terms of Turkey. In addition to describing the Republic of Turkey as a country that organizes regular elections, the author also referred to the AKP's rule since 2002 and wrote that the government has shown a diminishing respect for civil liberties and political rights in the last five years. In 2016, the terrorist attacks in Gaziantep and Istanbul and the coup d'état are the main reasons for the declining respect. The analysis of free media in the light of the 2017 data on free media mentioned that many media outlets belonging to the Fethullah terrorist organization were closed down and banned. In the aftermath of this process, it is noteworthy that many journalists were imprisoned regardless of whether they were FETÖ members or not, and that the AKP tried to bring most of the media under its protection.

Although the Constitution protects freedom of religion, religion has become more prominent in the public sphere as a result of the policies of the AKP, which seeks to ensure its continuity through religious expressions. Studies showing that government-friendly sermons are preached in mosques prove that the connection between the AKP and religion is being strengthened. It is claimed that there is a religious agenda in favor of Sunni Muslims and the oppression of Alevis is mentioned as an outcome of this. The evidence for this is the unequivocal ruling of the European Court of Human Rights on discrimination. Finally, it mentions the official recognition of Jewish, Orthodox and Armenian Christians.

Academic freedom has become a major concern, the company said, after more than 1,400 Turkish academics signed a petition calling for an end to military intervention in Kurdish-majority centers, and were investigated for what it described as treason. As a result, many academics were fired and detained. University deans were forced to resign, nearly 4,000 academics suspected of links to FETÖ were dismissed and 15 universities were closed down.

Many restrictions on internet access were imposed during the state of emergency, including restrictions on Twitter. The fact that pro-Gülen websites were blocked after the coup, as well as other accounts critical of the government, can be said to be a disability in terms of freedom of expression.

4.2.   Turkey in 2018

In 2018, Turkey dropped 16 points in political rights and 16 points in civil rights, to the status of an unfree country with a 32% freedom rate. With the transition to a more centralized presidential government system, the governance system became more centralized and continued to adopt restrictive policies for the continuity of power as in 2017. The mass replacement of elected mayors with government appointees, the prosecution of rights defenders and other perceived enemies of the state, and the purges of state employees have also prevented citizens from expressing opinions on sensitive issues.

According to the research firm, Turkey's April referendum, which was characterized by a highly unbalanced electoral process, had its legitimacy undermined by an illegal ballot system and counting. The prolonged state of emergency and the government's use of decrees to govern was also a key issue undermining the rule of law.

In terms of free and independent media, Turkey did not deviate from the 2016 trend, and the banning of Wikipedia in 2017 was a notable change in this section of the company's research. It also noted that, unchanged from 2016, the mainstream media reported pro-government news and most TV channels ran headlines in favor of the government.

It also mentions the continued oppression of Alevis, the increase in the number of schools supporting Sunni Islam and the introduction of compulsory religious education.

In paragraph D3, which focuses on academic freedoms, it mentions that 5,000 academics were suspended at the beginning of 2017. In addition, in July 2017, the government announced a new school curriculum that excludes the theory of evolution and includes jihad lessons that it does not recognize with patriotic rhetoric. Another outcome of the research is that the curriculum is intended to continue the production of an increasingly religious and ideological content that conforms to the AKP's views.

Within the scope of the evaluation of sub-paragraph D4, the researches stating that citizens cannot easily express their opinions explained this process by referring to the discourse of self-censorship. Considering the long prison sentences and detention periods, citizens face this fear when expressing their opinions on a subject and cannot act freely. Freedom House, which had given me a score of 2 out of 4, later downgraded the D4 score to 1 due to increased self-censorship among ordinary people as a result of an ongoing government crackdown on dissent.

4.3.   Turkey in 2019

In 2019, Turkey scored 15 points for political rights and 16 points for civil liberties and remained as an unfree country with 31% freedom rate. Although Turkey's score change is not in civil liberties, which is the subject of our review, it would be appropriate to look at whether there are any changes and additions between the sub-paragraphs.

While there were no significant changes affecting the freedom score in sub-paragraphs D1 and D2, the score in sub-paragraph D3, which includes academic freedoms, remained the same, but in

addition to the researches, the change introduced in July 2018 regarding the rector appointments, which can be considered as a threat to academic freedom, draws attention. In both public and private universities, rector appointments will be made by the president, preventing academics from researching sensitive topics. Freedom House states that this increases self-censorship and political pressure on academia.

While there is no significant change in item D4, the fact that hundreds of people, including doctors, construction workers and high school students, were detained in January and February 2018 for their social media posts criticizing the Turkish military offensive in Syria's Afrin region does not change the score but can be considered as an addition to the justification.

4.4. Turkey in 2020

In 2020, Turkey scored 16 points for political rights and 16 points for civil rights and remained an unfree country with a 32% freedom rate. The 2019 local elections proved that the AKP's authority is not unlimited. The opposition party, which won Istanbul and Ankara, remained in a position to change the course of politics after 2019. The imprisonment of Selahattin Demirtaş on new terrorism charges and the conviction of Canan Kaftancıoğlu, the CHP's Istanbul provincial chairperson, were also events in 2019 that affected 2020. At the same time, the military operation in northern Syria and the detention of those who criticized this operation were among the important movements in 2019.

Although the score in item D1 remains unchanged, there is a change in the rationale for the score. Freedom House mentions that RTÜK has come under the influence of the ruling party and its supporters. Journalists continue to be arrested regularly during this period. However, it also stated that 13 journalists were released. In addition, the Wikipedia ban imposed in 2017 was ended in late 2019 by a constitutional court ruling. While there is no significant change in D2, in D3, we come across an inference that journalists arrested after the coup period were released. In D4, as stated in the overview section above, the detention of those who criticized the military operations in Syria due to their social media posts constitutes a difference in terms of the reason for scoring.

4.5. Turkey in 2021

In 2021, Turkey scored 16 points for political rights and 16 points for civil rights and remained an unfree country with a freedom rate of 32%. The Covid-19 crisis, the defining event of this year, has been a threat to the economy and the political position of the government. The inconsistent information provided by the authorities in line with official health statistics and the initiation of criminal investigations against medical experts who published independent information about the pandemic had an impact on the non-free country status in 2021. In these years, during which various arrests and detentions continued, there are significant changes in Freedom House's D1 and D2 headings. However, these changes did not create a plus or minus compared to the previous year's ratings. In D1, in addition to the previous year, it mentions that the government continues to expand its attempts to control news and information sources. It mentions restrictions on the content of international applications such as Facebook and Twitter, which are legally guaranteed and subject to heavy fines if not complied with.

The difference in line D2 is related to the policies regarding the Karabakh war. In 2020, the increasing targeting of non-Muslims with hate speech and the Turkish government's attacks on ethnic Armenian forces in Nagorno-Karabakh were included in the scoring rationale as another argument strengthening this discourse.

Although there is no significant change in lines D3 and D4, it is mentioned that the arrests due to Covid-19 and FETÖ continue.

4.6. Turkey in 2022

In 2022, Turkey remained an unfree country with a 32% freedom rate, scoring 16 points for political rights and 16 points for civil rights. 2021 was marked by the dismissal of the rector of Boğaziçi and his replacement with a political ally, and violent protests among students and faculty. As a result, Erdoğan dismissed the rector, a political ally of his, and appointed another political ally as rector in his place. The constitutional court's acceptance of the case to shut down the HDP in June and the unilateral decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention were also listed as influential events in 2021.

Looking at row D1, Freedom House wrote that in August 2021, the government blocked the web pages of 141 news reports published by Bianet, an independent outlet, which documented government corruption, the prosecution of journalists, and the increase in gender-based violence in the country. The bans imposed on Facebook and Twitter continued to increase, and in March 2021, all major social media companies opened offices in Turkey and continued their activities within the framework of these bans.

While there is no change in line D2, D3 mentions the protests and student movements stemming from the rector incident mentioned above in the overview section.

In row D4, we again see the results of arrests and detentions. In 2021, many social media users were detained for expressing their opinions on the rector crisis at Boğaziçi University and faced prosecution for their complaints about the economy. It also mentions criminal complaints against 26 people, including a former central bank governor, several economists and journalists, for criticizing the central bank's social media policies in the midst of a major currency crisis in December.

4.7. Turkey in 2023

In 2023, Turkey scored 16 points for political rights and 16 points for civil rights and remained an unfree country with a 32% freedom rate. Freedom House began by noting that the reduction of the threshold from 10% to 7% as a result of an electoral law passed by the AKP-led parliamentary majority changed the way seats were distributed among party alliances. The reason for this, it said, was to prevent the formation of a broad opposition alliance before the elections. In October, a law was approved imposing prison sentences of up to three years for those deemed to have incited misinformation on social media. Canan Kaftancıoğlu's conviction was upheld and İmamoğlu was convicted of insulting state institutions. In April 2022, Osman Kavala was convicted of conspiring to overthrow the government and sentenced to life imprisonment.

Line D1 states that the law imposing prison sentences of up to three years for individuals spreading misinformation on social media, as mentioned above, has been approved. It also states that a Kurdish journalist was detained prior to trial for posting on Twitter about allegations of sexual assault against a 14-year-old girl by police officers and soldiers, and that the first arrest warrant was issued in accordance with the law. The journalist was released after his lawyer filed an objection, but the case remains pending until the end of the year.

In line D2, the company referred to violent attacks on Alevi institutions in 2022, stating that at least five Alevi NGOs and places of worship were attacked between July and August. In line D3, it is written that restrictions on academic freedom continued unchanged from other years. In D4, the arrest of singer Gülşen for her remarks on religious education and her release in September may also be a reason for the stable scoring. It also mentioned that following the deadly bomb attack in 2022, the government forced international social media outlets such as Twitter, Facebook and Telegram to restrict access.

4.8. Turkey in 2024

In 2023, Turkey scored 17 points for political rights and 16 points for civil rights and remained an unfree country with a 33% freedom rate. It is safe to say that the reason for the changes in this year's scoring system is not due to restrictions, bans and arrests, but rather to increasingly apparent wrong economic policies and a major earthquake on February 6, 2023. The organization mentions that in May 2023, Erdoğan renewed his power by defeating his rival Kılıçdaroğlu. It also writes that with the earthquake, the government deepened its restrictions on freedom of expression and toughened its censorship policies. As a reflection of these practices, he observes that arrests took place, no different from previous years.

While no significant changes were observed in rows D1, D2, and D3 compared to previous years, row D4 states that 78 individuals were detained after February 2023 on the grounds of causing fear and panic through social media posts related to the earthquake. It also states that authorities identified 613 social media users who made inflammatory posts, with legal proceedings initiated against 293 of them. It also states that the government, which blocked access to the x application on the grounds that it had a negative impact in the context of search and rescue efforts, detained a German MP for several hours in August 2023, whom a Turkish prosecutor claimed was spreading terrorist propaganda.

5. CONCLUSION

In this study, based on Freedom House data, Turkey's level of democracy between 2017 and 2024 is evaluated within the framework of freedom of expression and freedom of belief under the heading of civil rights. The findings show that Turkey has moved away from a democratic regime and evolved into an authoritarian and even totalitarian regime. Turkey's democratic decline since 2017 is part of a broader trend that cannot be explained solely by domestic political transformations. Turkey appears to be moving toward a regime type defined in the literature as competitive authoritarianism. In these regimes, even if elections are formally maintained, the ruling party limits the competitive power of the opposition by using state resources to its own advantage. From this perspective, it is not wrong to compare Turkey's experience with the media control and weakening of judicial independence seen under Viktor Orban's administration in Hungary, Vladimir Putin's neutralization of institutional opposition in Russia, and the concentration of executive power after Hugo Chavez in Venezuela. Therefore, Turkey's regression to the status of an unfree country can be seen not only as a national phenomenon but also as a reflection of the trend of democratic decline observed in many countries in recent years.

2017 stands out as a year in which the state of emergency regime continued in the immediate aftermath of the July 15, 2016 coup attempt and the government's crackdown on the media and academia intensified.

In 2018, with the transition to the presidential government system, Turkey was relegated to the status of an "unfree country". Inequalities in electoral processes, media control and further shrinking of academic autonomy were effective in this transformation.

In 2019 and 2020, the crackdown on freedoms of expression and belief continued systematically, and detentions and arrests for criticizing the government increased. It is possible to see that arrests, especially of journalists, increased in these later periods. Again in these years, the criminal sanctions imposed on citizens due to the Boğaziçi protests and criticism of the Afrin operation revealed that freedom of expression was narrowed.

2021 and 2022 were a period in which developments such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the rector appointment at Boğaziçi University increased the government's efforts to control the flow of information. The strengthening of control over RTÜK and social media supports this trend.

2023 was characterized by legal regulations for elections, criminal sanctions introduced by the social media law and judicial processes against opposition figures such as Canan Kaftancıoğlu, Ekrem İmamoğlu and Osman Kavala.

In 2024, with the post-earthquake crisis, the crackdown on freedom of expression took on a new dimension; detentions for social media posts increased and access blocking intensified.

In 2017, Turkey was recognized as "partially free", but in the following years, it has fallen to the status of "not free" for a number of reasons, one after the other. This decline has followed a parallel course with the authoritarianization of state policies towards freedom of expression and freedom of belief. It can be argued that freedom of belief has been restricted by a number of influences based on the conservative view held by the government and changes in foreign policy. At the same time, the systematic suppression of freedom of expression and the right to dissent, which Robert Dahl considers essential in explaining polyarchic democracy, has had significant effects on the decline in Turkey's democratic level. Democracy, which emphasizes the importance of the separation of powers rather than the concentration of power in a single subject and at the same time incorporates many concepts such as equality and freedom, has not been seen to develop without popular influence. Although the democratic tradition of the election of the ruler by the people is maintained in Turkey, fair and equal elections and the absence of pressure on the opposition, as mentioned above, are also important for the country's democracy. Political participation and civil liberties, which connect and influence each other at many important points, are crucial for democratization. In Turkey, which is becoming increasingly authoritarian, it is important for democratization to remove the tutelage over the media, to rebuild academic autonomy in universities, to introduce independent judicial control and to remove the pressure on the opposition as much as possible.

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Kazak Millî Edebiyatından Bir Tarihî Roman: Efsanenin Sonu

Historical Novel from Kazakh National Literature: The End of The Legend

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Özet

Abiş Kekilbayev, Efsanenin Sonu adlı romanında, Kazak Millî edebiyatının tarihî roman türündeki bir örneğini kimlik-geçmiş ve aşk olguları üzerinden aktarır. Sovyet dönemi Türk dünyası için millî temaların yasaklandığı ve hor görüldüğü bir dönemdir. Birçok yazar tarihsel ve toplumsal değerlerini metaforik bağdaştırmalar aracılığıyla eserlerinde kullanır. Bu bakımdan dönemin içinde bulunduğu baskı ortamı, yazarları anlatı düzleminde sembolik göndermelere yöneltmiştir. Kekilbayev Efsanenin Sonu romanında millî ve tarihî değerleri bir aşk hikâyesi üzerinden kurgular. Eser, bütüncül bağlamda büyük bir saltanata sahip olan ve emrinde binlerce insan bulunan bir Han'ın güç ve iktidar algısının zamanla nasıl değiştiği üzerine kurulur. Başka ülkelerin bayraklarının ayakları altına düşmesinden zevk alan Han'ın şöhretin getirmiş olduğu yaklaşılamamazlık ve korkunun sonucu tinsel anlamda kalabalıklar içindeki yalnızlığını anlatır. Fiziksel anlamda etrafında eşleri, çocukları, torunları, vezirleri ve muhafızları olsa da içinde yaşamış olduğu korku ve şüphenin onu sarması sonucu yalnızlık ve sıkıştırılmışlık itkisine kapılması eserin ana izleğidir. Gelişen olaylar neticesinde, karşı tarafa olan güven yoksunluğu, ölüm ve kader karşısındaki basiretsizlik ve çaresizlik eserde işlenen ana konulardır. Bu çalışmada *Efsanenin Sonu* adlı roman, roman tekniği açısından incelenecek, tematik yapısı bireysel ve toplumsal bağlamda değerlendirilecektir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Kırmızı Elma, Yalnızlık, Han, Minare, Efsanenin Sonu, Ölüm.

Abstract

In The End of the Legend Abish Kekilbayev articulates one of the most refined examples of the historical novel within Kazakh national literature, intertwining the notions of identity, collective memory, and love. The Soviet period constituted an era during which national themes were censored or ideologically suppressed across the Turkic world. Consequently, numerous writers employed metaphorical and allegorical devices to encode historical consciousness and socio-cultural values within their narratives. This atmosphere of political constraint inevitably directed authors toward symbolic discourse and multi-layered narrative strategies as a means of intellectual resistance. Within this framework, Kekilbayev's novel reconfigures national and historical values through the lens of a love story. The narrative centers on the psychological and moral transformation of a Khan—once the sovereign of a vast dominion and commander of thousands—whose perception of power and authority gradually deteriorates. The novel traces the Khan's existential isolation, depicting how his delight in subjugating other nations and witnessing their flags trampled beneath his feet transforms into a profound spiritual desolation. The inaccessibility and fear that accompany fame and absolute sovereignty culminate in a state of inner confinement and solitude. Although the Khan is physically surrounded by wives, children, viziers, and guards, the pervasive anxiety and suspicion enveloping his consciousness render him emotionally detached and spiritually estranged. The ensuing distrust toward others, the sense of futility in confronting death, and the fatalistic submission to destiny constitute the novel's principal thematic axes. This study undertakes a critical examination of The End of the Legend from the perspective of narrative technique and thematic construction, situating its aesthetic and philosophical dimensions within both individual and collective contexts.

Keywords: Red Apple, Loneliness, Khan, Minaret, Efsanenin Sonu, Death.

1. INTRODUCTION

The novel "The End of the Legend," whose Kazakh title is "Anızdın aqırı," was first published in Kazakh in 1969. The novel's first edition in Turkish was published by Da Publishing in 2002. Aynagül Daniyarova narrated the novel. The novel was first published under the title "Minare." Damira İbragim says of Kekilbayev: "He artistically uses the song formula found in legends, myths, and folk tales as the basis for the ceremony." (İbragim, 2010: 18). In this novel, Kekilbayev, through the character he calls Khan, is essentially depicting the Timurid era. Even if the person before us is a sultan, he describes his inner intensity, his inability to cope with loneliness and death, regardless of how much gold and jewelry he possesses. The title "The End of the Legend" was conceived by the author to reflect the resignation of history's great sultans to their fates in the face of the impasses between death and fate. The loneliness and desolation of a ruler who, having spent his life in glory and fame, becomes isolated within his own shell among the masses is explored within the context of love on two distinct dualistic planes: legend and end.

The novel is written from a dominant point of view. This point of view allows the narrator to understand the characters' intentions, feelings, thoughts, desires, and goals. They see and hear what has already happened and what will happen. While they can read the thoughts of the characters in the novel, time can also be in different places. The narrative stands outside the plot. "The first person singular is not used. The third person singular "He" is always used. In a written work, the events, the individuals who comprise the characters, and the characteristics of the setting are expressed through the attention of a narrator created in a style appropriate to what is being described or depicted" (Aktaş 2013: 72). The characters, settings and observations in the narrative are expressed through views and language that are disconnected from the narrator's own inner world.

"The Creator gave the fruit on the tree neither intelligence, nor honor, nor the desire to always be at the top. Humans know this simple truth. To fall from the summit, after persistently climbing a long path, means death. Therefore, Khan, who was expected to fall by his envious enemies, never fell; on the contrary, he strived to rise even higher" (Kekilbayev 2002: 29).

In the first chapters of the novel, the narrator tells Khan that he should use his power and strength carefully, otherwise this power and strength will destroy him, through the story of Solomon, in the third person singular:

One day, an ant asked Solomon, "Do you know why God Almighty has made the wind subservient to you?" Solomon was at a loss. The ant replied, "This means that one day the same wind will dissipate your kingdom." Solomon turned pale. The ant said, "Does God Almighty convey His commands to the great through the mouths of the weak?" and departed. If fortune had also turned its back on Solomon, who could be exempt from it? (Kekilbayev 2002:10).

In keeping with the dominant point of view, the novel also features flashbacks and dialogues. After returning from a campaign, Khan retreats to the palace garden, where he retreats to the pain of his past. He recalls the events he encountered during his previous campaigns. In keeping with the dominant point of view, the events unfold in the form of an internal monologue: "Who is this good and gracious man who saved me? The only memory I have of my mother was this diamond necklace. Tell me your name..." (Kekilbayev 2002: 25).

"From the dominant perspective, values, judgments, and observations can be made about the characters and characters in the narrative. "Also, the Grand Vizier was a dignified, sensible person. He did not show greed or steal." (Kekilbayev 2002: 25).

The novel "The End of the Legend" consists of four intertwined sections. The first section is titled "Red Apple," the second "Minaret," the third "Love," and the final section "The End of the Legend."

In the first part, upon returning from his expedition, Khan approaches the city and notices the magnificence of the blue minaret that distinguishes it from the others. The minaret's distinguishing feature is that, when viewed from a distance, it resembles a woman longing for her lover, waiting with her hand outstretched. However, when approached, it appears arrogant and pompous. This part depicts Khan's realization of his own loneliness. Rejecting anyone in his palace garden, Khan retreats into his inner world, deprived of human emotions by fame, crown, and throne. He knows that every being in the world is a couple, but he feels utterly alone in this universe. His mother frequently offers advice about his reign. She advises him to stay with his wife, who has no children by his side when he grows old, because only she can protect him from his other wives and serve him until death. His mother warns him to use his power and strength justly, warning him that otherwise, this power and strength will destroy him. The mother's ontic warning to her son is, in a sense, a warning directed at his level of awareness. In this respect, the mother appears in the narrative as a life-giving force that changes, transforms, and ontically establishes the hero. In this respect, the mother: In the narrative, she also appears as the "sublime individual archetype" as a symbol of wisdom and the female role within the context of Turkish customs and life. "The sublime individuals who enable the discovery of the deep connection between the hero's consciousness and subconscious represent the subliminal life-giving force on a symbolic level" (Şayhan 2022: 141). The mother's warning to the hero that the power he wields will lead to the illusion of control is a warning to the continuity of his reservoir of existence.

Initially unaware that the red apple presented to him was wormy, Khan later becomes suspicious when the same apple is presented to him. There is a symbolic allusion here. The warning to Khan is architect Cabbar's affection for his young wife. Although Khan believes the apple came from his elder wife's jealousy of her, the situation plunges him into deep thought. At this point, the apple is symbolized—with its opposite value—as a warning to Khan's awareness of his weakness. There is a color symbolism here related to the beginning. The "red apple," a reference to creation and a very important place in Kazakh culture, is a reference to the divine realm of the hero's power and sovereignty.

The second section tells the story of architect Cabbar's arrival in Dvurechye from Or-Türbe with his father. His father, a potter, noticed that Cabbar was different from his other children and took him into his workshop. His goal was to train him as a master in the workshop and make him a renowned architect. The Khan's young lady ordered the Grand Vizier to build a minaret in honor of her husband, one that would stand out from the rest of the city and symbolize his love for him. This task was entrusted to architect Cabbar, and his goal was to build a structure that would stand out from the piles of adobe walls and meet the endless blue of the sky. Little Hanım, eagerly watching the minaret's construction, wanted to see it in person. She saw the young lady atop the minaret and fell in love. She now wanted to create a unique allure for the minaret and a mystery that would inspire admiration in the eyes of the public.

The third section expresses the young woman's intense feelings for the Khan, a love and affection as intense as a child's, while Cabbar's hopeless love for the young woman is also revealed. The Khan's journey with his elder wife and grandchildren creates an uncontrollable feeling of loneliness and abandonment in the young woman. She is overjoyed when the Khan sends her a jewel with a rose on top in a sealed box, accompanied by his guards. The ice that has enveloped her heart melts, and she tries to express her love for the Khan. She decides to write a letter, but then gives up. She resolves to build a love minaret to express her love for him. When she goes to see the minaret in its original state, she encounters the architect. He sees the architect's sorrowful eyes gazing at her and smiles as he leaves. But the minaret remains unfinished. The minaret nears its completion, but it remains unfinished. From the top, Cabbar observes the young woman's garden. If he finishes it, he will never see his love again. The young woman cannot understand the minaret's incomplete nature. At first, she doesn't realize the minaret's sorrowful and painful gaze. Later, she realizes that its structure holds a special significance. Now she understands the sorrowful gaze atop the minaret. The minaret is actually saying, "Don't you still understand me?" This minaret expresses the young architect's love for her. Enraged by this, the young woman is at a loss. She wants to punish him, but fears it will harm the Khan's authority. Upon

receiving news of the Khan's return from the expedition, the young woman sends a message to the architect, instructing him to complete the construction. But the young architect only replies, "The construction will be completed only when he achieves something very important, something he has designed and thought about" (Kekilbayev 2002: 134). Fear grips the young woman. Looking out the Khan's window, she imagines what will happen to her when she sees the sorrowfully pleading minaret. Later, she goes to the minaret with her entourage and sees the gap filled the next day. The young woman, eagerly awaiting the Khan's return from the expedition, laments the impending passage of time and falls asleep, torn between dream and reality. When Han comes to her room at night, she unconsciously draws him to her with lust and desire. Han becomes suspicious of her situation and leaves. This worm eats away at Han's insides.

The final chapter tells of the Khan's bewilderment after unraveling the mystery of the wormy apple sent by his elder wife. Unbeknownst to him, the Khan's younger wife has never been with the architect. He has dressed a girl in his retinue, who resembles him, in his own clothes. The Khan, who has taken thousands of lives on the battlefield without a second thought for the children whom mothers have laboured to raise, is at a loss. Curious about what the people in the city are saying, he sends spies. Ultimately, the Khan decides to have Jabbar's eyes blinded and his tongue cut out to prevent the news. People interpret this as a warning that the beautiful minaret in the Khan's city will not be built in other cities. The Khan, fearing that this situation will also cast a shadow over his own reign, imposes the necessary punishments. The narrative reveals the Khan's loneliness. His legacy has withdrawn from him. While setting out on a campaign, the ring he never takes off falls from his finger, and he sees the man he doesn't love leaving. He considers this a bad omen. The sacred stone he saw in his dream eludes him.

2. STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS OF THE NOVEL

Throughout the novel, time, which sometimes proceeds chronologically, suddenly shifts to an achronological structure with flashbacks. As Han contemplates the palace garden, where he feels free, he travels back to the time when he and his first wife were held captive. For Han, this space is his space of freedom. As his subconscious drags him back to his past, the days he and his wife were held captive in this space, perceived as a symbol of freedom, come back to haunt him, overshadowing his current sense of peace. This creates a paradoxical conflict within Han's inner world, revealing the perpetuation of tension within the equation of freedom and captivity. This space of peace, in effect, becomes a mirror reflecting the traumatic events of the past.

In The End of the Legend, the primary physical spaces are Dvurechye, the Khan's palace, the Palace garden, the dungeon, Cabbar's house, the Minaret, and the Khan's gold-embroidered carriage. Such spaces do not offer in-depth psychological analysis of the characters; they are merely places where individuals temporarily reside, physically traversed. Perceptual spaces are those that make visible the protagonist's ontological connection with the space. In this respect, perceptual spaces are divided into two categories: closed/narrow/labyrinthine spaces and open/wide spaces whose boundaries open to infinity (Korkmaz 2007: 403).

What matters in confined, narrow, and labyrinthine spaces is not the physical size or smallness of the space in narratives, but the psychological impact these spaces have on the individual. The space ceases to be a decorative backdrop; it suggests the fear, hysteria, and psychological constriction within the character's subconscious. In this respect, it makes visible the pressures and conflicts within the characters' inner worlds. In this way, the space in narratives prepares the characters for psychological formations and transformations. Indeed, in the novel "The End of the Legend," the most significant element in which the concepts of loneliness and nothingness are explored through the spatial dimension is the desert, which appears as a labyrinthine space:

"The funnel-shaped holes left by the hooves of the tired, slow horses would soon fill up again with sand. The unbroken tracks left in the dunes by the guards, riding their fine horses in the lead, glancing sullenly around, just an arrow's throw away, would instantly fade. The merciless and silent sand, eternally accustomed to the instability and futility of life, obliterated all traces of this dead, ashen, boundless void" (Kekilbayev 2002: 5).

The desert represents an infinite space, open on all four sides, and not confined to a specific area. While the desert is depicted as an open space on the narrative plane, its value system reflects the symbolic value of a labyrinthine space. Although it depicts a vast expanse, it reveals the character's sense of confinement within their world. "The narrowness of the space stems not from its physical smallness, but from the character's impossibility and the feeling of being confined within it. Whether it's a forest, desert, plains, or sea in the physical sense, it doesn't necessitate classifying the space as 'open' or 'wide.'" (Korkmaz 2007: 403). It is a place where the individual feels uneasy and experiences internal conflicts. The desert and the dungeon where they were held captive while fleeing the enemy with Khan's first wife are significant in this regard: "Wandering in the desert between life and death, he fell into the hands of a Bey living in the desert. He and his wife were thrown into a dungeon forty fathoms deep. Neither the light of the sun nor the light of the moon penetrated this damp and foul-smelling well" (Kekilbayev 2002: 35). In the narrative, the desert and dungeon spaces signify an existential realm where boundaries are drawn between life and death, captivity and captivity. The boundaries of the space are clearly delineated, and "a dungeon forty fathoms deep" becomes a concrete experience of imprisonment. The dungeon is not just a physical confinement; it is the spatial equivalent of an ontological loneliness in the characters' inner worlds. In this respect, the dungeon offers an image of rebirth for the protagonists in the narratives as they journey toward their own centers.

The novel "The End of the Legend" hints at Khan's loneliness amidst his growing old age and his fame and renown. It also depicts the helplessness and loneliness of Cabbar and the young woman facing their fate. The novel's plot generally features enclosed spaces. However, Khan finds relief in the palace garden, where no one else is allowed, to escape the loneliness brought on by his subordinates and his fame:

But here, in this tiny place beside the eternal spring, he felt no power. Here, he commanded no one. Here, the clear, flowing fountain, the countless birds chirping peacefully, and the large-eyed damselflies trembling on their slender wings above the water were not under the Khan's command. No one feared him here. Only the roe deer who chanced upon him would hide among the trees. But their flight was not because he was the Khan, but because he belonged to a malicious two-legged tribe. When he went to his beloved spring, the armed guards and palace servants would step aside to avoid encountering him (p.16, 17).

The battlefield and the desert, which might first come to mind as a vast space, are actually places where the character feels comfortable and achieves individual spiritual fulfillment. It's a space where there's no human authority, where a physical boundary is drawn within the rhythm of nature. In this space, it demonstrates that "birds, insects, and gazelles" do not submit to any authority, be it Khan or human authority. It demonstrates that humans exist solely as beings on this plane.

The characterization in "The End of the Legend" is limited. The novel's protagonist is Han. Küçük Hanım and Cabbar also exist around the main character within the plot.

The novel's protagonist, Khan, reflects the characteristics of a dictator/tyrant ruler of the 1400s. The word "dictator" here does not imply that Khan is a villainous or despotic character; on the contrary, it reflects the characteristics of the era. "To better understand a work by placing it within its historical context, it is sometimes necessary to understand the worldview, beliefs, and conventions of the era in which it was written" (Moran 2013: 79). In this respect, the sociological context of the society in which Moran's narratives were created is crucial for contextual evaluation. The wars, deaths, and massacres Khan engaged in do not necessarily mean he was a bad statesman.

Han's most striking character trait is his cautious approach to unfolding events. He never reveals his secrets or weaknesses; he possesses a keen understanding of events. "Because only one person in this world has the right to hold a secret: himself!" (Kekilbayev 2002: 19). When he's about to make a judgment about a situation, he naively asks questions and appears ignorant. His aim is to understand the situation without the other person realizing it. Another aspect of his life is that, as he ages, he withdraws into his own inner world, becoming overwhelmed by doubts and anxieties. Throughout his statesmanship, he never tolerated gossip or envy, and he took no pleasure in those who slandered others. Because those who approach him with such stories are hesitant, he tries to explain them through specific insinuations and symbols.

Normative characters are those that enable the protagonist to change, transform, and gain dimension within the narrative. In this respect, protagonists possess characteristics that actively influence the process of change and transformation throughout the narrative. Korkmaz describes normative characters as "these characters serve functions such as creating contrast and reassuring the reader, as well as reflecting and embodying the flaws of the primary protagonists." (Korkmaz 1997: 298). Aksakalli Seyid, acting as his intermediary, served as the Khan's guide from time to time. When he had a bad dream and/or encountered an incident, he sought advice from him on what to do. "Before going to war, he would always first visit this cleric. Before engaging the enemy, he would touch his beard and receive his blessing. Then he would go to the largest mosque in his capital and pray" (Kekilbayev 2002: 177-178). Khan's mother was one of his greatest mentors. She advised him on the importance of old age, on his ability to see beyond the realm of space like a telescope, and on his throne, fame, and sultanate.

"Don't value your throne above your shoes. It won't protect you from the damp and cold. Don't think this rich palace is safer than your armor. It too will be pierced by arrows. Don't think your army is as impregnable as your shield by a sword. They will lead it astray. Don't trust your children and grandchildren born to different women. They too will betray you. Now know that numerous women and concubines cannot replace your wife. You have no wife, my son. Those women you have are like mares. The child in your womb will be more important to them than you. The foal will begin to gallop after the stallion grows and becomes strong. You know this too. You must beware of this. Don't have many sons. The old wolf had many cubs and then drove him from his lair "(Kekilbayev 2002: 38-39).

Throughout the narrative, stories from the holy book about Prophet Solomon are periodically included; Khan is given advice, emphasizing that pride and lust are man's greatest enemies. In this regard, Prophet Solomon is told that his power and authority will ultimately lead to his destruction.

Flat characters appear one-dimensional in narratives. Such characters "need an opponent to oppose the thematic forces represented by the primary hero in order for conflict to occur and the chain of events to become convoluted" (Aktaş 2013: 46). The key character in the novel, though not particularly prominent in thematic structure, is Han's elder wife. The rivalry and jealousy between Han and his younger wife escalate to the point of informing on and slandering each other. Their envy of the younger woman, who is more attractive than he, becomes palpable. Learning of Architect Cabbar's love for the younger woman and fearing Han himself, they project this love onto Han with a wormy red apple, slandering him.

Background characters do not interfere with the ethnic narrative. They are not subjected to internal or psychological analyses. They are characters who serve to maintain the narrative within the novel and lack any functional qualities. In works based on narrative, such as extras in theater and cinema, there are also characters who provide a sense of local color and serve to better portray the event or fragment of the event being presented. "Foot characters, with little psychological or social depth, are decorative elements inserted into the narrative to establish the social atmosphere in the novel and to portray events as realistic." (Şahin 2011: 1570). The girls in the young lady's entourage, who have little function in the novel, Merchant Ahmet Bey's daughter Zühre, and the palace guards are background

characters. "When she went to her beloved spring, the armed guards and palace servants would step aside to avoid encountering her." (p. 17) Construction workers working on the minaret were also added to this structure.

3. THEMATIC STRUCTURE OF THE NOVEL

The values that create the intrigue and provide the conflict in the novel The End of the Legend "KORA" scheme (Korkmaz, 2015: 282)

	Ideal Values	Counter-Values
Context of Characters	- Khan - Architect Cabbar - Little Lady - Khan's Mother - Cabbar's Father - Ahmet Bey - Zühre -White-bearded Seyid - Khan's Mother	- Grand Lady - Executioner - Spies - Palace Guards - Grand Vizier
Context of Concepts	- Loneliness - Impossible Love - Love - Beauty - Compassion - Mercy - Justice - Obedience - Sacrifice - Self-sacrifice - Power - Power - Longing	-Jealousy -Competition -Ambition -Lust -Gossip -Cheating -Arrogance -Massacre -War -Tribulence -Envy -Loneliness -Old Age
Concept of Symbols	-Minaret -Red Apple -Kaaba -Holy Bible	-Desert -Palace -Dungeon

4. LONELINESS

When viewed through the lens of intricate fiction, *The End of the Legend* appears to be a romance. From a meaning-centered perspective, Han's desire for gain and power alienates him from human pleasures and values; he appears to have forgotten the meaning of real life. With the onset of old age, his loss of physical strength leads Han to question his inner strength and the purpose of his existence. Did the fame and glory he achieved through years of greed truly bring him happiness, or did they isolate him? Was the love of his wives truly due to his love for him, or did it stem from his status as Khan? "The desire for prestige creates a tension in the spiritual life; this tension leads to a clearer vision of the goal of power and superiority, and he strives to achieve it with even more intense effort than usual." (Adler 2013: 221) What captivates Khan is his desire for prestige and reputation. For years, he becomes captive to his desire for power and prestige; each new title and fame he earns further isolates him. He is like a prisoner even in his own palace; he cannot even freely enter his wife's chamber, and the prohibitions he imposes become chains that limit him. Loneliness manifests itself from the moment he is born.

The concept of loneliness is evident throughout the novel. Even after being separated from his first wife's child, he felt lonely even in the army, at a noisy feast, and with his wives, sons, and children. In response to aging, he followed his mother's advice and married a young woman. His mother told Khan: "When you no longer have the power, do not stay with the woman with whom you have more children. She will use your children to humiliate you and tarnish your honor. Stay with the woman who has no children. She can only be protected from her other wives with you, and she will respect you until death." (p. 39). Khan wants to relieve his loneliness by being with his young wife, but age and suspicion are man's greatest enemies. One weakens a person physically, the other decays them internally. The suspicion he feels for his young wife consumes him from within. Khan, powerful enough to shed blood on a single command for hundreds of thousands, is now seen facing his helplessness. Unwilling to harm his harem, Khan is at a loss for words. In fact, his mother's advice to him was correct: "The child in their womb will be more important to them than you" (Kekilbayev 2002: 38). Despite being surrounded by armies, wives, and concubines, he was lonely. He was always deprived of true love. He was alone in the crowd.

5. IMPOSSIBLE LOVE

The novel "The End of the Legend" is structured around the central theme of love. The love the young lady feels for Khan, and the love Architect Cabbar feels for Khan's young lady, constitute the narrative's central conflict.

The theme of love makes itself felt at the beginning of the novel's main points of departure, shaping the dramatic action and ensuring the continuity of the narrative pact. The narrative draws on Architect Cabbar's love for the Khan's Young Lady, and the embodiment of Cabbar's love is depicted through the minaret.

In the novel "The End of the Legend," the Khan's young wife decides to have a minaret built to express her love for the Khan. Architect Cabbar, who commissioned the minaret, falls in love with the young woman who wants to tour the construction site. Architect Cabbar's initial intention in building the minaret was to merge with the deep blue sky and gaze down upon the adobe-walled city. However, after seeing the young woman, he wanted to portray his love for her with the minaret. There's a mystery that distinguishes the minaret from others, yet no one has yet been able to solve. From a distance, it appears to be a woman's outstretched hand, but upon approaching, it becomes undeniably arrogant and gloomy.

Here, the minaret symbolically represents love. It is the physical embodiment of his love. Internally, it will be a manifestation of it, unfolding into eternity and embodying eternity. The minaret is the concrete manifestation of Cabbar's love. With its structure extending toward the sky, it expresses his desire to transcend worldly boundaries.

While trying to unravel the mystery of the minaret, the Khan is confronted with a wormy apple, which raises suspicions. The Khan has no tolerance for gossip or slander. When someone wants to break bad news to him, they try to convey it through insinuations. The apple was sent by the Khan's eldest wife. The Khan, who uncovered the mystery surrounding the apple incident, ordered Jabbar's eyes to be gouged and his tongue to be cut out to prevent his reputation from being tarnished.

For Cabbar, love, despite painful experiences like being thrown into wells or having a shaft drilled into their eyes, is a spiritually nourishing essence. In this respect, the impossibility of love is the most crucial element shaping the dramatic action in the narrative. Thus, through impossible love, Architect Cabbar becomes aware of his self-worth and, through love, reveals his infinity. Indeed, the minaret metaphor is one of the most significant indicators of this. An individual experiencing a spiritual revolution through love seeks to elevate this revolution or to proclaim his love to the world by imprinting it on the world with something symbolizing this love. Thus, they seek to experience the destructive face of death in the physical sense and immortality in the spiritual sense through something that symbolizes

themselves and their love. Thus, the minaret motif also becomes a symbol of immortal love. Just as love opens the human soul to the blue, it opens it vertically to the spiritual, to immortality and immensity. In this context, the minaret motif, at least for Architect Cabbar, is a manifestation of the possibility of impossible love. Thus, Cabbar surrenders himself to the creating, revealing and multiplying power of Love, against the destructive certainty of death.

The human soul, floating like a baby's head in the endless waters of time, must direct itself toward a specific purpose. The state of "clinging" to the world, of taking root, is one of the most fundamental cores of humanity. Architect Cabbar, with this love, seeks to believe in the need to hold on to the world. For, despite its impossibility, love becomes possible/probable for Architect Cabbar. From this perspective, Architect Cabbar seeks to protect himself from being lost in the infinite void of the universe through love. Indeed, the architect, rooted in the world through his work, always maintains this vitalizing and creative impulse, which will also nourish his soul in a spiritual sense.

6. AUTHORITY/POWER

The concepts of power and authority are complementary terms with parallel meanings. Looking at the definition of power, the Turkish Language Association defines it as: "1. The ability to exert influence or resist influence in terms of physical, intellectual, and moral strength, force, or effort. 2. Any action, force, or energy that causes an event. 3. Unlimited, absolute quality." The definition we will focus on in the context of power/authority is the third definition, "unlimited, absolute quality." The concepts of power/authority and authority have changed over time, from ancient times onwards, in the understanding of absolute power between Western and Eastern societies. Absolute monarchy, feudalism, and church-based governance, which were influential among European countries, began to give way to democratic forms of governance with the advent of the Renaissance, Reformation, and Industrial Revolution.

When examining Eastern societies and Turkish state governance models, it is observed that this transition process progressed relatively more slowly compared to Europe, yet both civilizations exhibited similar and parallel characteristics. Turkish state governance models can be evaluated under two temporal categories: pre-Islamic and post-Islamic governance. In the pre-Islamic Turkish form of government, the "Kut Belief" is the belief in Turkish state traditions that the task undertaken by the Khan/Khan ruling the country is bestowed by God. The Turkish Language Association explains 'Kut' as follows: "1. Power possessed in terms of strength, creativity, and authority in state administration. 2. Happiness. 3. Mercy and blessing from a divine source." This understanding, which began before Islam, was a form of governance that continued until the Ottoman Empire. It was believed that the authority to govern the state was granted by the Sky God. Even after the Turks embraced Islam, this form of governance continued for centuries. Although the concept of Kut changed in religious terms with the acceptance of Islam, the logic remained the same in functional terms. Differences in governance styles can be expected due to the two distinct periods, but these differences cannot manifest themselves due to the similarities in beliefs between the Sky God and Islam. The existence of monotheism in both periods is one of the reasons for this. At the same time, the Turkic peoples who became Muslim created a new model by synthesizing their way of life with Islamic motifs. Especially during the Abbasid period, when the sultanate passed to the Turks, the Central Asian Turkic tradition continued to exist strongly during the transition period of the Karakhanid and Seljuk states. The legal rules applied by the Khans/Khagans before Islam were combined with Sharia rulings and reinforced within Islamic law. As a result, a new political management approach/power was acquired by the existing Muslim Turkish states. Ultimately, the power approach they applied led to the emergence of Muslim Turkish states that ruled the world for years.

When considering the concepts of power/authority from the perspective of Western thinkers, various views exist. Weber (2005) classified the concepts of power/authority and authority into three categories: 1. Traditional, 2. Charismatic, and 3. Legal/Rational.

Traditional Authority According to Weber, the first example of the connection between absolute power and authority within the ongoing historical timeframe is seen in traditional authority. Societies prior to the Industrial Revolution drew power from traditional authority, which was accepted and embraced within society in connection with established cultural values. Traditional authority, embedded in societies with a collective spirit, means that individuals accept a leadership system passed down from father to son. In the traditional understanding of authority, the ruler/sovereign/king can use his absolute power for good or evil at his own initiative. This is because it is believed that this power was given to him by God, and they are seen as godlike. Traditional authority is seen in societies where the established public order changes slowly and where traditions and beliefs are respected. Within the developing world order, the increase in prosperity and the development of technology and industry lead to a decline in such societies.

Weber's second form of authority is the concept of "Charismatic Authority." According to this concept, an individual is defined as a figure who stands out from other people and groups in their environment due to their physical and verbal characteristics, possessing extraordinary powers, a sacred quality, or unique functions specific to themselves. In the charismatic authority concept, the leader derives their power and legitimacy from their individual characteristics. The individuals in the society under their influence have complete faith in and obedience to their leaders. The emergence of charismatic authority typically occurs during chaotic and crisis periods within nations or societies, usually through a leader who stands out among these societies or groups. Examples of charismatic authority can be frequently found in recent history: names such as Lenin, Atatürk, and Gandhi can be multiplied.

When we come to the form of Legal/Rational Authority, it is a form of authority based on laws and regulations established within the framework of collective reason, enlightened by a collective consciousness, and drawing its power from the people of the geography it governs. "Those with the authority to command become powerful according to this set of rules, exercise their authority within its limits, and again, according to these rules, depart from power "(Weber, 2006: 59). The difference between this form of authority and traditional and charismatic authority is that people believe in and apply the supremacy of the laws enforced to ensure the continuity of the system within the existing structure, the legitimization of the ongoing order, and, similarly, their own security and level of welfare. Within this authority, the power of the government is exercised within the framework of established rules. Unlike other concepts of authority, dictatorship is not attributed divine or sacred meanings. Power has the authority to command as a result of established laws. The rulers and the ruled have responsibilities to each other within the framework of certain legal rules. The purpose of power is to serve its citizens, to whom it is accountable under specific laws.

Based on Weber's concept of authority, we can personify the Khan within the continuity of social dynamics in terms of adherence to tradition in the concept of traditional authority. Considering the fact that the author was inspired by Timur, we can conclude that the Khan was bound to traditional authority, where traditions and beliefs were respected. In this respect, traditional authority attempts to guide social dynamics with its own unique sanctions. One of the most important indicators of the Khan's adherence to backward customs and traditions is his blinding of the architect Cabbar and cutting out his tongue.

In The End of the Legend, while love appears superficially in the plot unfolding within the fictional plane, it carries with it a deeper sense of loneliness and the danger of losing power and authority as a result of aging. Han, who rules over half the world, faces the fear of his absolute power and authority being limited as a result of aging. He is concerned that the power he holds will be used by those within his own palace.

The power and authority he possesses, in a way, push the Khan into isolation. He cannot, in a way, define the limits of his own power. He has not attained power and authority; rather, power and

authority have attained the Khan. Even within his own palace, he lacks the courage to approach his young wife upon returning from a campaign. Apart from state ceremonies and receiving ambassadors, the Khan did not see his wives during the day. The rules he himself had set now held him captive. Through anachronistic flashbacks in the novel, the Khan's mother, who acts as a kind of mediator for him, warns him. "When you no longer have power, stay with the wife you have had many children with. She will use your children to humiliate you and tarnish your honor. Stay with the wife who has no children. She can only be protected from your other wives by you, and she will respect you until her death." (p.39) The Khan must always be one step ahead of his enemies. He must never fall prey to the slander and envy that would make him the subject of gossip. He alone had the right to keep secrets in this world. "When a secret is yours, it is your weapon. But once you tell someone else, it is no longer yours; it becomes their weapon." (p.19) Having lived his entire life under a constant mechanism of control, authority, power, and order, the ruler now faces the anxiety of his absolute authority being shaken due to the reasons brought on by old age.

7. CONCLUSION

Abiş Kekilbayev's novel The End of the Legend is one of the novels that reflects Kazakh national culture from a realistic perspective. Emphasizing the concept of loneliness in his work, the author addresses the theme of love, encompassing not only people who lead simple lives, but also the desolation and abandonment of a ruler who lives a life of fame and splendor, yet remains isolated within his own shell among the masses. The novel tells the two-dimensional tragedy of Cabbar, who is in love with the Khan's wife. Cabbar burns with love and passion for the Khan's young wife, but he is also aware of the difficulty and impossibility of realizing his love. Even if they were together, he knows that it would be an endless union and would ultimately end in death. On the other hand, the Young Lady knows that Cabbar must unite with her to complete this "minaret of love." Therefore, before Han arrives, she sends one of the beautiful girls of the palace to Cabbar so that he can finish the minaret, and she gives him her own dress. This is the second dimension of Cabbar's tragedy. In fact, both Cabbar and the Sultan have been deceived here. The reason the Young Lady does this is so that the minaret can be completed as soon as possible. The Sultan's second deception occurs in a dream, and some may argue that this cannot be considered deception. The reason for this is that dreams occur during sleep and consciousness is temporarily suspended. These are not actions performed consciously and according to the person's own instructions. Another tragic circumstance is that, despite possessing the qualities sought in a woman, Little Lady is married to a sultan much older than herself. Although Little Lady believes she loves Han and wants to build a minaret, as a result of her repressed feelings pushed into her subconscious, she desires a young man in her dream. This situation/conflict is successfully depicted within the plot of the novel. Although this movement in the fictional plane seems beautiful, the situation is not quite so. In this respect, although the author has an omniscient perspective in the novel, he does not enter the inner worlds of the characters. Although the author reflects the inner worlds of the characters, he does not include monologues, conversations, or words. He gives the opportunity to get to know all the characters through their own words. As a result, he distances the reader from the novel and draws them into the events, emotions, suspicion, and jealousy.

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ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Seyahatnâme'de Mezopotamya'nın İnanç Coğrafyası: Evliya Çelebi'nin Kaleminden Ziyaretgâhlar, Tekkeler ve Halk İnancı

The Religious Landscape of Mesopotamia in Evliya Çelebi's Seyahatnâme, Shrines, Sufi Lodges, and Popular Beliefs *

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Özet

Bu çalışma, Evliyâ Çelebi'nin Seyahatnâme'sinde Mezopotamya coğrafyasına dair inanç mekânlarının tarihsel, kültürel ve sembolik işlevlerini incelemektedir. Araştırma, özellikle Mardin, Nusaybin, Cizre, Hasankeyf ve Musul şehirlerinde kutsal mekân inşasının halk inançlarıyla kurduğu ilişkileri çözümlemektedir. Evliyâ Çelebi'nin metinleri, klasik tarih yazımından farklı olarak gözlem, sözlü kültür ve mistik sezgiyi harmanlayan bir anlatı biçimi sunar. Bu anlatılar; ziyaretgâhlar, tekkeler, türbeler, kutsal sular ve menkıbeler etrafında şekillenen bir inanç atlası oluşturur. Çalışmada Evliyâ'nın gözlemleri, Mardin'de Şeyh Zûlî Sultan menzili, Hasankeyf'te Zülkifl Makamı ve Şeyh Emir Sultan türbesi, Nusaybin'de peygamberî ziyaretgâhlar, Cizre'de Nuhî hafıza ve Musul'da tılsımlar ile peygamber menkıbeleri üzerinden analiz edilmiştir. Her şehir, dinsel hafıza ile toplumsal kimliğin iç içe geçtiği bir "kutsal topografya" olarak konumlandırılmıştır. Seyahatnâme, bu yönüyle yalnızca bir seyahat anlatısı değil; inanç, bellek, coğrafya ve kimlik arasında kurulan çok katmanlı bir ilişkiler ağını görünür kılan kültürel bir metin olarak değerlendirilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Evliyâ Çelebi, Seyahatnâme, Mezopotamya, Halk İnancı, Kutsal Mekân.

Abstract

This study examines the historical, cultural, and symbolic functions of sacred spaces in Evliya Çelebi's Seyahatname, with a particular focus on the religious geography of Mesopotamia. The research analyzes how the construction of sacred sites in the cities of Mardin, Nusaybin, Cizre, Hasankeyf, and Mosul interacts with local systems of popular belief. Evliya Çelebi's narrative departs from conventional historiography by blending empirical observation, oral tradition, and mystical intuition, thereby producing a distinctive form of storytelling. His accounts create a spiritual atlas structured around pilgrimage sites, dervish lodges, shrines, sacred springs, and miracle narratives.

The study explores Evliya's observations through specific examples: the Şeyh Zûlî Sultan sanctuary in Mardin, the Zülkifl and Şeyh Emir Sultan shrines in Hasankeyf, the prophetic loci in Nusaybin, the Noahic memory in Cizre, and the talismanic and prophetic traditions in Mosul. Each city is presented as a "sacred topography" in which religious memory and social identity are intertwined. The Seyahatname is thus interpreted not merely as a travel account but as a cultural text that reveals a multilayered network of relations among faith, memory, geography, and identity.

Keywords: Evliya Çelebi, Seyahatname, Mesopotamia, Folk Belief, Sacred Space

1. INTRODUCTION

In the Ottoman intellectual and cultural sphere, the relationship between folk beliefs and place stands among the most powerful carriers of historical continuity and collective memory. In this context, Evliya Çelebi's ten-volume *Seyahatnâme* is not merely a geography or an encyclopedia of cities written through the eyes of a traveler; it also constitutes a vivid portrayal of the popular mentality, religious practices, and faith-based cultural symbols of the Ottoman world.

Particularly in the fourth volume, the Mesopotamian cities—such as Mardin, Nusaybin, Cizre, and Mosul—embody a dense sense of sacredness in both geographical and metaphysical terms. In Evliya Çelebi's depictions of these regions, prominent elements include pilgrimage sites, saints' tombs, Sufi lodges and convents, sacred springs, and natural spaces shaped by legends and hagiographic narratives. The narrative style adopted by the traveler differs from conventional historiography in that it interweaves personal observation, oral culture, and mystical interpretation, thereby producing a multi-layered textual structure. Consequently, the *Seyahatnâme* lends itself to being read as an atlas of faith.

The aim of this study is to analyze, within a historical and cultural framework, the sacred spaces and belief-related sites described in the Mesopotamian cities of the *Seyahatnâme*'s fourth volume. The research is based on the edition *Seyahatnâme, Volume IV*, prepared by Seyit Ali Kahraman and Yücel Dağlı.

Throughout the study, the following questions are addressed: What kinds of insights do Evliya Çelebi's observations provide regarding popular religion? Through which indicators does the construction of sacred space emerge? And in what ways might contemporary faith tourism draw upon this historical legacy? The study evaluates these questions within the broader literature on folk religion and sacred geography.

2. METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was designed based on the method of qualitative textual analysis. Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatnâme* was examined primarily through its fourth volume, focusing on the sacred sites located in the Mesopotamian cities. These sites were evaluated through thematic coding, narrative analysis, and symbolic spatial reading techniques. The analytical process not only concentrates on the level of content but also aims to interpret the relationship of the narrative with oral culture, its contribution to the construction of sacred space, and its functions in relation to collective memory.

During the analysis, in addition to the historical and social context, conceptual frameworks such as cultural memory, embodied practices, places of memory, and heterotopia served as guiding perspectives. Accordingly, the theoretical foundation of the study is grounded in approaches that examine the multilayered relationship between memory and space.

Pierre Nora's conceptualization of *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory) highlights that sacred spaces are not limited to religious functions but act as structures that encode collective memory and reinforce historical continuity (Nora, 1989, pp. 7–12). In this context, the shrines and tombs described in the *Seyahatnâme* are interpreted as sites of memory.

Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia provides a functional tool for analyzing alternative spaces that exist outside the normative order and are defined by temporal and functional ruptures (Foucault, 1984). The tekkes, zawiyas, cemeteries, and shrines depicted by Evliya Çelebi are interpreted

as heterotopic spaces which, although situated outside the established social order, operate in parallel with it.

Paul Connerton's theory of embodied practices demonstrates that memory is transmitted not only through written records but also through ritual repetitions and bodily performances specific to place (Connerton, 1989, p. 37). Practices such as prayer, shrine visitation, and votive offerings mentioned in the *Seyahatnâme* are examined as carriers of this embodied memory.

Jan Assmann's theory of cultural memory emphasizes the constitutive role of space in the transformation of individual memories into collective ones (Assmann, 2015, p. 47). Evliya Çelebi's detailed depictions of sacred springs, mountains, caves, and saints' tombs are evaluated as examples revealing the historical continuity of this spatial memory.

Gaston Bachelard's approach to the poetics and sensory experience of space reveals the connection between remembrance and sensory elements such as silence, light, and scent (Bachelard, 1994, p. 38). The metaphorical and image-laden narrative style Evliya Çelebi employs in his descriptions of sacred places is interpreted as an indicator of this poetic construction of space.

Doreen Massey's conceptualization of space as a network of social relations demonstrates that sacred sites bearing traces of the past are also dynamic arenas where contemporary identities are reconstructed (Massey, 2005, p. 9). The places depicted in the *Seyahatnâme* are therefore considered as representations of both historical continuity and the social fabric of Evliya's own time.

This theoretical framework reveals that the narratives in the *Seyahatnâme* offer a multilayered field of interpretation that goes beyond mere reflections of popular belief, encompassing aspects of social memory, spatial construction, and cultural continuity. Evliya Çelebi's text thus unites the experiences of an observant traveler with the voice of an oral culture narrator, presenting itself as a holistic object of study that integrates primary source material with theoretical analysis.

3. SHEIKH ZULI SULTAN SHRINE IN MARDIN

Situated in the northern part of Mesopotamia, Mardin has historically formed an important crossroads along the east–west and north–south routes, due to its proximity to the lower tributaries of the Tigris River and the sources of the Khabur Stream (Le Strange, 1905, p. 96). Its strategic location and defensible topography made the city a political, cultural, and religious center throughout the Middle Ages. From the Seljuks to the Artuqids, Mardin developed a multilayered urban character. This accumulation is reflected not only in the city's stone architecture but also in its narrative world, transforming Mardin into a locus of both historical and spiritual memory.

Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatnâme* stands as one of the most significant sources revealing the deep layers of this collective memory. In the fourth volume of his work, where he records his observations on the Mesopotamian region, Evliya devotes special attention to Mardin. In his depiction, the city emerges not only with its architectural richness but also with its spiritual depth, complex religious fabric, and enduring popular piety. Within this framework, he refers to the "residence of Hazrat Sheikh Zuli Sultan," describing it as "a great site of visitation in the land of Mardin." He notes that the figure known among the people as "Sheikh Zuli" was, in fact, "Sheikh Shehrezuli," whose name was simplified over time in popular speech. This observation clearly demonstrates Evliya Çelebi's attentiveness to folk culture, linguistic transformation, and the role of sacred sites within the fabric of social life.

Evliya recounts that he visited this shrine during his journey in 1065 AH (1655 CE) and concludes his narrative with the following statement: "It has already been written above that Shehrezuli was a true saint and that all the people visited his shrine during our journey in the year 1065. May God sanctify his secret." This sentence reflects a recurrent stylistic feature of Evliya's prose: the union of historical observation and spiritual reverence within a single narrative framework. His language reveals that he viewed sacred sites not merely as objects of description but as settings of lived spiritual experience (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, pp. 743–744).

The mention of Sheikh Zuli Sultan's shrine in Evliya's records illuminates a sacred geography in which popular piety was strongly rooted in seventeenth-century Mardin. This tradition has survived for centuries and continues today in the Sultan Şeyhmus Tomb located in Sultan Village, within Mardin's Artuklu district. Known among the local population as "Sheikh Zuli" or "Sheikh Musa," this site represents a living extension of historical memory. It is known that Musa bin Mahin al-Mardini al-Zuli, who is buried in the tomb, died in 470 AH (1077–78 CE) (Göyünç, 1991, p. 72). In local narratives, Sheikh Musa appears as a Sufi master renowned for his miracles. According to tradition, he restored sight to a blind man, blessed the poor with abundance, extinguished fires by striking the ground with his staff, and even revived a dead ox through his prayer (Beşer, 2017, p. 1032). These hagiographic accounts elevate Sheikh Musa to a position of enduring spiritual authority in the collective imagination of the people.

The miracles attributed to Sheikh Musa transcend the bounds of individual piety, contributing to the formation of a broader regional field of sanctity. Legends linking him to Abd al-Qadir al-Gilani—such as Gilani's coming to greet him and recognizing his spiritual superiority—suggest that this sanctity extends beyond local boundaries into a wider Islamic geography of memory (Beşer, 2017, p. 1032). Each miracle narrative becomes a silent ring in the chain of remembrance woven into the meaning of the tomb. Over time, these rings accumulate, transforming the tomb into far more than a mere site of visitation: it becomes a center where remembrance, emotion, and contact with the sacred are embodied in space (Kaya & Tayanç, 2025, p. 60).

Evliya Çelebi's account of the Sheikh Zuli Sultan shrine in the *Seyahatnâme* is therefore crucial for understanding the historical foundations of the sanctity still maintained at the Sultan Şeyhmus Tomb today. His observations reveal that popular religious traditions have continued as a living cultural practice transmitted across centuries without interruption. This continuity demonstrates the decisive role of sacred spaces in Mardin's collective memory as loci of worship, belonging, and shared remembrance. In this sense, Mardin, as portrayed by Evliya Çelebi, stands as a living component of the sacred geography of Mesopotamia—a spiritual bridge linking the past and the present.

4. PROPHETIC MEMORY AND POPULAR SAINTHOOD IN HASANKEYF: THE SACRED AXIS FROM THE TOMB OF DHU AL-KIFL TO THE GARDEN OF IREM

There are various views regarding the etymology of Hasankeyf. The earliest records of the name appear in the annals of the Assyrian King Ashurnasirpal II (r. 884–859 BCE), where the settlement is referred to as "Kipani"; the text notes that the king crossed the Tigris and collected tribute from these lands (Lehmann-Haupt, 1910, p. 375; Taylor, 1865, p. 34). The fact that "Kipani" was located west of Nisibis suggests a geographical correspondence with present-day Hasankeyf (Mıynat, 2008, p. 9). The Roman historian Pliny, writing in the first century CE, mentions a region called "Cephenia," located on the border of Adiabene (Pliny, 1999, p. 369). Lehmann-Haupt argues that this region geographically coincides with Hasankeyf (Lehmann-Haupt, 1910, p. 375). In the sixth century, Procopius recorded the name as "Ciphas," demonstrating the continuity of the toponym across the sequence "Kipani–Cephenia–

Ciphas" (Procopius, 2002, p. 319). The forms "Hesna Kepha" in Syriac texts, "Kentzy" in Armenian sources, and "Hısn al-Kayfa" in Islamic records further attest to the city's multilingual and multicultural historical identity (Oğuzoğlu, 1997, p. 364).

In Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatnâme*, Hasankeyf emerges as a privileged station within the prophetic topography of Mesopotamia. In his narrative, the city functions as a sacred center where the chain of prophecy intersects with the tradition of local sainthood. The shrine of Prophet Dhu al-Kifl to the north of Hasankeyf and the maqam of Sheikh Emir Sultan along the banks of the Euphrates represent two primary axes that unite prophetic legacy with popular religiosity (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 745). After recounting different historical opinions concerning the tomb of Dhu al-Kifl ibn Ayyub, Evliya presents his own interpretation based on what he considers "authentic" knowledge. He reports that while some historians claimed that Dhu al-Kifl was buried at Hasankeyf, his true tomb was located "near the village of Rafiyya by the Hillah fortress, beside the tomb of Hazrat Ali, on the banks of the Euphrates" (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 745). This comparative approach reveals the epistemological balance in Evliya's narrative: oral tradition is transmitted, yet corrected through empirical observation.

Following his reference to the "gate overlooking the side of the Hasankeyf fortress," Evliya turns to the shrine of Sheikh Emir Sultan. This site occupies a central position in the devotional life of the Kurdish communities of the region: "All the Kurds believe in this sultan and visit him. May God sanctify his secret" (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 745). This expression makes visible a shared notion of sainthood that transcends the strict boundaries of Sunni orthodoxy. Sheikh Emir Sultan appears both as a representative of the local saintly cult and as the focal point of the people's prayers, vows, and intercessory practices.

In Evliya's account, Hasankeyf thus becomes a spiritual threshold where prophetic heritage, embodied in Dhu al-Kifl, meets the living sanctity represented by Sheikh Emir Sultan. This dual structure provides a compelling example of how the Ottoman-era popular faith intertwined with the prophetic tradition. As the traveler leaves Hasankeyf and proceeds southward through the ruins of Karadere toward the road to Baghdad, he writes that he "endured a hundred thousand hardships in the barren desert" (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 746). This statement implies more than physical travel; it evokes a mystical *seyr-i sülûk*—a spiritual journey of endurance and revelation. For Evliya, heat, thirst, and fatigue are bodily trials that mark the path toward the sacred.

At the end of this arduous journey, he reaches the Garden of Irem—an legendary site described both in the Qur'an and in popular mythology as "a paradise descended upon the earth." Evliya presents this garden as a station of contemplation along the road to Baghdad (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 746). In classical Islamic cosmology, Irem symbolizes the extravagance and arrogance of the people of 'Ād; here it acquires meaning within a triad of nature, morality, and divine admonition. For Evliya, the Garden of Irem is both an "earthly paradise" and a "scene of divine wrath." This dual symbolism reflects his mode of transforming nature into a moral and spiritual landscape. The place reached "after a hundred thousand hardships" becomes a metaphor of pilgrimage—a journey that tests the traveler's patience while allowing him to witness the manifestation of divine order.

The route stretching from Hasankeyf to the Garden of Irem thus constitutes, in Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatnâme*, not merely a geographical passage but a sacred axis where prophetic memory, popular belief, and moral reflection converge (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, pp. 745–746). The narrative of Dhu al-Kifl embodies theological continuity; the legend of Sheikh Emir Sultan represents communal piety; and the Garden of Irem symbolizes human transience. In this sense, Hasankeyf emerges in Evliya Çelebi's Mesopotamian vision as a spiritual geography extending "from prophecy to sainthood, from admonition to truth"—a threshold between time and eternity, along the banks of the Euphrates.

5. SHRINES, SUFI LODGES, AND POPULAR BELIEF IN NUSAYBIN

The name Nusaybin originates from an ancient toponym of Semitic roots. In classical sources, it appears as Nitibin, Nitibeni, or Nizzibi; in Armenian texts as Mebin; and in Arabic sources as Nasībīn, which eventually evolved into the modern Turkish form, Nusaybin (Honigmann, 1997, p. 99; Tuncel, 2007, p. 269). These linguistic variations, beyond simple phonetic shifts, reflect the traces of civilizational transitions and cultural continuity. Historical and mythological accounts offer diverse interpretations regarding the foundation of the city. Abū'l-Faraj records that the Babylonian King Nimrod encircled Nusaybin with walls, named it "the City of the Rivers," and that one of the three cities he founded was identified with Akhar (Akkad) (Abu'l-Farac, 1987, p. 75). In the Syriac tradition, Nusaybin is associated with the biblical city of Sobha, meaning "place of encounter," a designation that symbolically defines its historical position (Kütük, 2006, p. 32). Arab geographers describe Nusaybin as an important administrative center located on the upper course of the Hirmas River, within a wide and fertile plain in the fourth climatic zone (Kütük, 2006, pp. 26–27; Abdusselam Efendi, 2007, p. 4). Throughout the Roman, Sasanian, and Islamic periods, the city developed as one of the principal centers of Upper Mesopotamia, marked not only by political authority but also by cultural and intellectual vitality. As a historical crossroads, Nusaybin emerged as a border city of Mesopotamia, characterized by its multilingual, multi-religious, and multicultural structure, and as an arena of intellectual interaction where different belief systems were institutionalized (Azimli, 2006, p. 46; Şimşek, 2017, pp. 3–5).

Within this historical background, Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatnâme* reconfigures Nusaybin as a mystical topography. In his narrative, the city appears as both a network of shrines woven around prophetic legends and a cosmic landscape intertwined with the imagination of "Sakalān" (the realm of humans and jinn) (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, pp. 751–752). The house of Prophet Yunus, located to the north of the ruins, is described as a "masonry hut of sorrow" and "a pleasant lodge frequented by all those in need," representing one of the most tangible expressions of popular piety (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 751). The maqam of Prophet Ezra, though its endowments had fallen into ruin, is still described as "a place where prayers are accepted," and the mention of Indian dervishes residing there underscores the cosmopolitan and spiritual character of the site (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 751). The shrine of Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn ibn Imam ʿAlī reflects the local manifestation of deep reverence toward the Ahl al-Bayt; the people's words—"May God be pleased with him"—illustrate the continuity of shrine veneration in shaping religious identity (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 751). The maqam of Prophet Job (Ayyūb) is portrayed as dilapidated but complemented by the narrative of his "true tomb" near Müzeyrib Castle in the province of Damascus. Evliya notes that ten dervishes resided in its white-domed structure, and that the dome's gate faced north (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 751). The phrase "its dome is in ruins" used for the shrine of Prophet Khidr conveys that, despite physical decay, spiritual continuity remained unbroken (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 751).

The ancient name of Nusaybin, "Sakalān" (the land of humans and jinn), is recounted through references to hadith and exegetical traditions. The belief that Nusaybin was made the abode of the jinn after the creation of heaven and earth in six days, and that "the jinn delight in ruins," deepens the city's mythological and theological significance (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 752). Within this cosmic framework, King Sarfayāʾīl is portrayed as a benevolent spirit (*rūḥ tayyiba*) who had faith since the time of Prophet Solomon. His rule over Nusaybin for forty years after the birth of the Prophet Muhammad strengthens the notion of spiritual continuity between the realms of the jinn and prophethood (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 752). In the "cosmic trial" that took place on the first day of prophethood, Sarfayāʾīl and Tahlīc, having been informed by Gabriel, came before the Prophet, signifying that the divine message extended to the jinn as well (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 752). The ensuing dispute over ownership unfolds between the claim that Nusaybin was "ancestral land" and Iblis's assertion that he was its "first inhabitant." The Prophet prohibits the entry of both benevolent and malevolent spirits (*arwāḥ tayyiba / arwāḥ khabītha*)

into the city, dedicating it to the Muslim community. Thus, in popular memory, Nusaybin acquires sanctity as a city associated with immunity from jinn possession and with healing (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 755). On the same page, Evliya's observation about the malarial climate exemplifies his narrative's balance between rational observation and mystical intuition (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 755).

Iblis's defense, grounded in "pride born of love," reveals a Sufi interpretation that regards the command to prostrate before Adam as a denial of fidelity to divine love. The Prophet's call for repentance and his decree to make Iblis forget the *Ism al-Aʿẓam* (the Greatest Name of God) signify a moral order in which evil manifests as *waswasa* (whispering) within the human soul (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, pp. 756–757). The subsequent discussion on Iblis's origins and multiple names—Hāris, Abū Murra, Iblīs; Waswās, Khannās, Yuwaswis, Jinna—forms an onomastic demonology linked to the seven heavens and the recitation of the *Fātiha*. Correct pronunciation is portrayed as a metaphysical safeguard against error (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, pp. 757–758).

Through this narrative coherence, Nusaybin emerges as a topography of belief uniting historical layers with Evliya Çelebi's cosmic imagination. Interwoven with shrines, Sufi lodges, prophetic sites, and legends of the jinn, the city represents—both materially and spiritually—a frontier of Mesopotamia's sacred geography.

6. NOAHIC MEMORY, SHRINES, AND MULTIRELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE IN CIZRE

The settlement history of Cizre extends back to the Neolithic period. Archaeological evidence indicates that the region was influenced by the Hassuna, Samarra, and Halaf cultures from the seventh millennium BCE, and that traces of the Uruk culture became evident by the fourth millennium BCE (Yıldız et al., 2010, p. 226; Aydın, 2001, p. 22). Some scholars link the foundation of the city to the postdiluvian period and to the settlements located at the foothills of Mount Cudi. According to this view, the Mosque of Noah and the ark-shaped city walls are both material and symbolic reflections of faith following the Flood (Yaşin, 2011, pp. 15–16). Historical sources note that the ancient names of Cizre were *Kardu* and *Bazebda*, and that in 250 AH / 864 CE, Hasan b. ʿUmar al-Taghlibī rebuilt the city under the name *Ceziret ibn ʿUmar* upon the remains of a Roman fortress once called "Castle of the Tigris" (Karademir, 2019, p. 438).

Throughout antiquity, Cizre fell under the dominion of the Akkadian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, and Roman empires. Its strategic location on the banks of the Tigris River made it a center of both trade routes and cultural exchange (Beysanoğlu, 2014, p. 109). Conquered during the caliphate of ʿUmar by ʿIyād b. Ghanem, Cizre quickly established its Islamic identity with monuments such as the Great Mosque (*Ulu Cami*) (Belāzurī, 2002, p. 251). Under the Ayyubids, urban development, education, and agriculture flourished. Ibn Battuta later described the city as a vibrant, walled center with madrasas, baths, and bustling markets (Akbaş, 2012, p. 53; Bilgin, 2012, pp. 72–77).

Evliya Çelebi situates *Cezīre-i Ibn ʿUmar* (Cizre) within the sacred geography of Mesopotamia as a focal point where the postdiluvian narrative of Noah merges with institutionalized Islamic structures, Sufi networks, and multireligious local memory. His account weaves together the traces of the Noahic legacy, reinforced by Qur'anic exegesis, with a living fabric of popular religiosity sustained through mosques, madrasas, Sufi lodges (*tekkes*), and charitable complexes (*imarets*) (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, pp. 718–731). The end of the Flood, the mountain of Cûde (Cudi), and the adjacent city of Cûde are presented through the theme of "first settlement and first reconstruction": the ark is said to have come to rest on Cûde on Monday, the twelfth of Muharram, and the meal cooked in thanksgiving for deliverance from the Flood became known as *ʿĀshūrāʾ*. The "Sülupyān (The Saved) Mosque," built by Noah himself, is described as a revered site of visitation (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, pp. 718–719). Citing

Qurʾān 11:43, Evliya recounts the belief that the ark landed on Cûde, emphasizing the mountain's Kurdish highland setting and the persistence of associated devotional practices (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 719).

A striking account regarding the circulation of the Noahic legacy relates that the wooden planks of the mosque at Cûde were dismantled during an invasion and later affixed to the doors of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. Thus, the sanctity rooted in the Flood was symbolically incorporated into the Christian–Byzantine monumental architecture of the imperial capital (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, pp. 718–719). The sacred status of Cizre is further deepened by the story of *Ṭarḥ ibn Nūḥ*, described as "the first person buried on earth." According to legend, Ṭarḥ was born during the Flood when Noah's wife went into labor, and his burial in Cizre endowed the city with a blessing linked to Noahic fertility. Frequent twin births and longevity among the population were attributed to Noah's supplication; his forty-foot-long tomb, located in the Tur Abdin quarter, became a venerated shrine (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, pp. 720–721). This record portrays Cizre as a city bearing the "corporeal trace of prophecy."

Within the urban fabric, Islamic institutionalization is prominent. The *selatin* mosque where the Ottoman sermon was delivered, approximately 240 neighborhood mosques, and madrasas such as Mir ʿAbdālī, Süleyman Beyi, Meydan, and Kalealtı are described in detail, including their endowments and educational continuity (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 728). The Sufi landscape centers around the lodge of *Hazrat Muhammad al-Ghawth* from the Naqshbandi *Khājahgān* lineage; the presence of dervishes from India, Uzbekistan, Chagatai, and Kumuk origin highlights Cizre's role as a spiritual *barzakh*—a liminal space of mystical convergence (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 733). The Bey Bathhouse and the water balance system that supplied the inner citadel are described as "marvels that bewilder the mind," merging engineering ingenuity with the sanctity of water as a purifying element (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 729). The communal distribution of "honey sherbet" on Ramadan nights and the daily provision of two meals in charitable kitchens (*dār al-ziyāfa*) illustrate a social religiosity grounded in mercy and generosity (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 731).

In Evliya's depiction, Cizre also emerges as a multireligious landscape. He records two churches belonging to the Jacobite, Nestorian, and Armenian communities, one Jewish *kunnis* (synagogue), and the presence of Yazidi reaya within the city (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 731). Thus, the Muslim majority encircled by Noahic memory coexisted within the same spatial fabric as Christian and Jewish communities. The city's culture of leisure—gardens, vineyards, and some ten thousand "huts of sorrow"—formed the everyday geography of popular piety (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, pp. 731–732).

The map of sacred sites extends beyond the Noahic memory. Outside the city, a lofty shrine attributed to Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq and the *Mashhad of Imam ʿAlī* near the Water Gate are noted as centers of prayer and votive offerings. The record that the Shafiʿi scholar Muḥammad b. al-Jazarī is buried in Cizre connects his 109-verse *Jazariyya* poem—central to Qur'anic recitation and tajwīd—to the city's intellectual and devotional networks (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, pp. 733–734). The presence of a family descending from Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī and the belief that the stoppage of a charitable watermill signaled a death within this lineage illustrate how omens and signs were institutionalized in local faith (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, pp. 732–733).

In conclusion, Evliya Çelebi portrays Cizre as a threshold city woven around the intertwined themes of Noahic origin, corporeal memory (*Ṭarḥ ibn Nūḥ*), institutional Islam (mosque–madrasa–imaret), Sufi circulation (Naqshbandi/Ghawthiyya), multireligious coexistence (churches–synagogue–Yazidi subjects), and the culture of visitation. This configuration unites the "blessing that survived the Flood" with the social compassion embodied in the networks of endowment, Sufi lodge, and charitable

kitchen—placing Cizre at the very heart of popular religiosity and layered memory within the sacred geography of Mesopotamia (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, pp. 718–734).

7. TALISMANS, MIRACLES, AND PROPHETIC SITES IN MOSUL

Throughout history, various views have been advanced concerning the name and origin of Mosul. While the Arameans called the city "Hansa Ebraya," in the Islamic period this appellation was attributed to Rawand b. Beyurasaf al-Azdahhāk (Havan, 2004, p. 6). In his Muʿjam al-Buldān, Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī records that "al-Mawṣila" ranked among the foremost centers of the Islamic world in terms of conquest and trade, counting as one of the major settlements of its time by virtue of its breadth and prosperity (Havan, 2004, p. 6). Guy Le Strange notes that during the Persian period the city was also called "Bavardašīr" or "Havardašīr," although he considers these names exceptional (Le Strange, 1905, p. 87).

Situated on the western bank of the Tigris, Mosul stood at the heart of Diyār Rabīʿa, the eastern part of al-Jazīra in the medieval period. The name Mawṣil, derived from the Arabic root waṣl (to connect, to join) and meaning "junction," directly reflects the city's geographical position (Sakkār, 2006, p. 361). At its founding, Mosul lay at the intersection of caravan routes and at the confluence of several branches of the Tigris—an advantageous location that illuminates both the etymology of its name and the regional role the city would play across the centuries.

Evliya Çelebi inserts Mosul into the same sacred chain as Nusaybin, portraying it as a center of "popular theology" where talismans and prophetic legends interpenetrate (p. 792). The first example is the "fountain of death," a curse formula embedded in the vernacular: it was believed that if a tyrannical ruler were made to drink from this water he would perish "within three days." Hence the malediction, "May the fountain of Mosul be the one you drink," reflects the linguistic imprint of this belief (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 792). A second example is the Ardashir fire temple near the ʿAlī Bath: according to Evliya, this fire, which went out on the night of the Prophet's birth, would at times ignite of its own accord "by the effect of talismans," illuminating caravan routes; he claims to have traveled "for eight hours" by its light during his return journey in 1059/1649. Although mineral explanations (sulfur/naphtha) are mentioned, the narrative ultimately anchors the phenomenon in the talismanic continuity of an ancient fire cult (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 792).

The most striking narrative in Mosul's prophetic memory concerns Ḥazrat Jirjis (Cercis/George). For calling the people of Rabī (Mosul) to faith, he is said to have been burned to ashes seven times and yet to have returned each time through a miracle of resurrection. A motif of geographical curse is forged through association with the dragon imprecation at Mayyāfāriqīn; at last he is denounced as a "sorcerer" and martyred by the sword (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 793). Evliya locates Jirjis's tomb "to the right of the minbar of the great mosque," noting that the presence of graves of Ottoman dignitaries in the same space suggests a convergence of prophetic remembrance and imperial memory within a single sacred topography (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 793). In this frame Mosul stands out not only by its individual shrines but also by the idea of "collective sanctity": a widely transmitted report holds that "seventy messenger-prophets" are buried beneath the paving of the courtyard of the Jāmiʿ al-Nūr (Great Mosque). While Evliya also relates disagreements regarding pre-diluvian graves, he contrasts these with references to consensus concerning the tombs of the Prophet and of Abraham, and with allusions to Ottoman judicial registers, underscoring official-religious oversight; at the same time, he presents the oral traditions of the ʿUrbān and Tatar groups as a local foundation of legitimacy (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 794).

The story of Prophet Jonah (Yūnus) acquires a localized, "geographical miracle" dimension in Mosul. Having been cast into the sea by lot and swallowed by the fish, Jonah is said to have been carried across "seven seas," brought to the Shatt, and cast ashore at Mosul on the fortieth day. The shade of the gourd, linked to Qurʾān 37:146, is complemented by the report that "the gourd was created here for Jonah for the first time" (p. 795). The belief that the "Jonah fish" visits Mosul each year exemplifies a sacred etymology within popular zoology. The formation of communal identities named in relation to Jonah—"Humaydiyya" in areas such as Aqrah, ʿImādiyya, Hakkâri, Duhok, Cizre—shows how the narrative becomes a regional charter of belonging; Evliya's note placing Jonah's tomb east of Mosul at the bridgehead beyond the Shatt topographically anchors this localization (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 795). The architectural description of the Jonah shrine renders the embodiment of sacred space visible: descending "eleven stone steps" through a curtained door to the left of the mihrab into the crypt, the visitor encounters a "luminous tomb" that makes one's "limbs tremble," capturing both the phenomenology of popular devotion and Evliya's sensory testimony (p. 796). On the same page Evliya records the veneration, within Shāfiʿī circles, of Shaykh ʿIzz al-Dīn b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm b. ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Shaybānī al-Jazarī (author of the Risāla al-Jazariyya) as a "great sultan," noting his death in 628/1231; the emphasis that Mosul housed "thousands of scholars and awliyāʾ" situates the city within a continuum that unites prophet, scholar, and saint (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, p. 796).

Taken together, these materials configure Mosul along an axis of "water–fire–word": the "fountain of death" is a talisman of moral justice condensed into water; the Ardashir fire becomes a cosmic sign lighting the night; and the narratives of Jirjis and Jonah establish a sacred topography where legend converges with stone (the shrine), with speech (transmitted report), and with administration (the judicial record). Thus Mosul emerges, in Evliya Çelebi's Mesopotamian vision, as the "central stage" of both supernatural justice and the culture of visitation (Evliya Çelebi, 2013, pp. 792–796).

8. CONCLUSION

Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatnâme* brings together historical continuity, the dynamism of popular religiosity, and the persistence of cultural memory in its depiction of the sacred geography of Mesopotamia. Extending from Mardin to Mosul, this broad landscape emerges as a multilayered cultural sphere where both faith and social identity take shape. Each city embodies the legends of the past, the prophetic heritage, and the Sufi traditions, thus becoming a concrete manifestation of collective memory.

Evliya's narrative style combines the precision of observation, the vitality of oral tradition, and the depth of intuitive perception. This synthesis renders sacred sites not merely as historical structures but as living spiritual centers. Shrines, lodges, tombs, and sacred waters constitute symbolic spaces that materialize the devotional practices of the people and reinforce their sense of belonging. Rituals of prayer, vow, healing, and visitation create an uninterrupted flow of spirituality between past and present.

The cities examined in this study are interpreted as complementary links in the chain of Mesopotamian religiosity. The lodge of Shaykh Zûlî Sultan in Mardin represents the continuity of popular sainthood; the shrine of Dhū al-Kifl in Hasankeyf bears the marks of prophetic heritage; the sanctuaries of Nusaybin embody the symbolic narratives of folk theology; Cizre preserves the universal memory inherited from the Flood; and Mosul, through its talismans and legends, becomes a focal point uniting faith and artistry. Thus, Mesopotamia transforms into a vibrant map of spirituality where multiple religious layers, cultural transmissions, and folk beliefs intertwine.

Evliya Çelebi interprets space not merely as a travel route but as a vessel of memory, belonging, and spiritual experience. For him, the city is a living text: every street, every shrine, and every spring reveals a stratum of meaning that carries the continuity of collective consciousness. This approach articulates a multifaceted understanding of place that encompasses both its physical and symbolic dimensions.

The Mesopotamian sections of the *Seyahatnâme* simultaneously reflect the transformation of popular beliefs over time, the social role of sacred sites, and the cultural fabric of memory. Through his pen, Evliya unites the aesthetic, emotional, and intellectual dimensions of popular religiosity, offering a distinctive perspective to the cultural history of Anatolia and Mesopotamia. This totality reinforces a vision of cultural continuity that carries the layers of the past into the spiritual sensibilities of the present.

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ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Gümrük Birliği Anlaşması'nın Türkiye ve Avrupa Birliği İlişkilerine Etkisi Üzerine Bir İnceleme

A Thorough Examination of the Customs Union Agreement and Its Ramifications On Türkiye-European Union Relations Is Imperative *

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Özet

1995 yılında yürürlüğe giren Gümrük Birliği Anlaşması, Türkiye ile Avrupa Birliği (AB) arasındaki ekonomik ilişkilerde dönüm noktası olmuştur. Bu çalışma, anlaşmanın Türkiye ekonomisine olan etkilerini çok boyutlu şekilde ele alarak, ticaret yapısındaki dönüşüm, sektörler bazındaki değişim, yatırım hareketleri ve sanayileşme süreçlerine katkılarını analiz etmektedir. Gümrük Birliği'nin Türkiye'nin dış ticaret kompozisyonunu nasıl şekillendirdiği, AB ile entegrasyon düzeyinin ne ölçüde derinleştiği ve bu süreçte karşılaşılan yapısal sorunlar ayrıntılı olarak incelenmiştir. Ayrıca, mevcut anlaşmanın artık günümüzün dinamik ticaret koşullarına yanıt vermekte yetersiz kaldığı, bu nedenle kapsamlı bir güncelleme gereksiniminin kaçınılmaz olduğu vurgulanmaktadır. Grafikler ve tablolarla desteklenen analizler, Türkiye-AB ilişkilerinde yeni bir paradigma ihtiyacını ortaya koymakta; özellikle dijitalleşme, yeşil dönüşüm ve küresel tedarik zinciri değişimleri ışığında iş birliğinin yeniden tanımlanması gerektiğine dikkat çekmektedir.
Anahtar Kelimeler: PKK, Terör, Şiddet.

Abstract

The Customs Union Agreement, which took effect in 1995, signified a pivotal moment in the economic relationship between Türkiye and the European Union (EU). This study employs a multidimensional analytical approach to examine the repercussions of the agreement on the Turkish economy. It assesses the transformation of the trade structure, sector-based changes, investment movements, and contributions to industrialization processes. The study also examines in detail how the Customs Union has shaped Türkiye's foreign trade composition, the extent to which integration with the EU has deepened, and the structural problems encountered in this process. Moreover, it underscores that the prevailing agreement has become inadequate to address the evolving dynamics of contemporary trade conditions, thereby underscoring the necessity for a comprehensive update. The analyses, supported by graphs and tables, reveal the need for a new paradigm in Türkiye-EU relations, particularly highlighting the need to redefine cooperation in light of digitalization, green transformation, and global supply chain changes.
Keywords: Customs Union, Türkiye-EU Relations, Foreign Trade, Economic Integration

1. INTRODUCTION

Relations between Turkey and the European Union (EU) were given an institutional framework with the signing of the Ankara Agreement in 1963, which is considered the cornerstone of Turkey's long-term European integration process. The Ankara Agreement aimed to increase economic, social, and political cooperation between the parties and initiated the preparatory process necessary for Türkiye to ultimately achieve full membership status. In line with this agreement, a three-stage integration plan was established between Türkiye and the EU; these stages, referred to as the preparatory, transition, and final periods, have evolved over time in accordance with various political, economic, and diplomatic developments. In particular, the Customs Union Agreement, which entered into force in 1995, marked a turning point in Türkiye-EU relations and has been regarded as one of the most concrete and functional steps in terms of economic integration. Under this agreement, Türkiye mutually abolished customs duties with the EU on industrial goods trade and also agreed to adopt the EU's common customs tariffs. Thus, Türkiye has integrated into the EU internal market through the elimination of customs duties and the harmonization of technical regulations. However, this integration has also brought significant structural imbalances, as it does not grant political rights such as full membership. Entering into a dynamic similar to the EU's common market structure, Türkiye has gained a European-centered orientation in its foreign trade and experienced significant increases in production quality and export volume. However, in addition to the advantages that the Customs Union has brought to Türkiye, some serious structural problems have also emerged over time. In particular, Türkiye's obligation to apply common customs tariffs without participating in EU decision-making mechanisms has created limitations on its sovereignty and narrowed its independence in foreign trade policies. The most concrete example of this is Türkiye's exclusion from free trade agreements (FTAs) concluded by the EU with third countries. This situation has caused a serious "trade diversion" problem for Türkiye; while countries that signed FTAs with the EU entered the Turkish market duty-free, Türkiye could not benefit from the same opportunities. These imbalances created a competitive disadvantage for domestic producers and exporters, increased the foreign trade deficit in some sectors, and directly affected Türkiye's economic interests. On the other hand, since the 2000s, when global trade has rapidly changed and evolved into a multidimensional structure, the current structure of the Customs Union has begun to fall short of meeting the requirements of the era. New themes such as the digital economy, trade in services, sustainable development goals, carbon regulations, and the European Green Deal have become central to the European Union's economic policies, while the current Customs Union framework with Türkiye does not include any regulations in these areas. Consequently, the current structure, which focuses on industrial products, excludes Türkiye from strategic areas such as digital transformation and the green economy, creating a significant gap in terms of both economic and environmental transformation. At a time when EU accession negotiations have stalled and political tensions have increased, the issue of updating the Customs Union serves as a strategic lever for restructuring relations. This update will pave the way for Türkiye to establish a more balanced and participatory relationship with the EU, not only economically but also politically, legally, and normatively. Furthermore, expanding the scope of existing trade regulations to include sectors such as agriculture, services, and public procurement will enable Turkey to become a stronger player in the European internal market. In this context, the article aims to comprehensively address the relations between Türkiye and the European Union from historical, economic, and political perspectives; it provides a scientific basis for discussions on updating the Customs Union. The article's main argument is that Türkiye-EU relations need to be redefined not only in terms of commercial indicators but also in areas such as participation in decision-making processes, digital transformation, environmental sustainability, and normative compliance.

2. LITRATURE REVIEW ON THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE CUSTOMS UNION

The Customs Union Agreement between Turkey and the European Union (EU), which came into force in 1996, has profoundly affected the course of economic and political relations between the two parties. There is extensive debate in the literature regarding the direction and scope of this effect. Aslan (2023) emphasises that the Customs Union has transformed the structure of exports and imports in the Turkish economy, particularly highlighting that compliance with EU standards in industrial goods trade has enhanced competitiveness. Similarly, Aytuğ, Kütük, Oduncu and Togan (2016) analysed the agreement's twenty-year performance using the 'synthetic control method' and found that Turkey's trade volume became more integrated into the EU market with the agreement's entry into force.

Erem (2021), examining the static and dynamic effects of the Customs Union, stated that although Turkey gained limited short-term gains in its foreign trade terms, it achieved more comprehensive gains in the long term through increases in technology and productivity. In contrast, Göçmen (2016) criticises the EU's policy of 'exclusion from decision-making' applied to Turkey during the update process, arguing that there are question marks over the sustainability of the asymmetric structure of the relationship.

Larch, Schmeißer and Wanner (2020) measured the deep and heterogeneous effects of the Customs Union, demonstrating an increase in intra-industry trade, particularly in the machinery and transport equipment sectors. Similarly, Koltuk and Kaval (2022) have outlined the economic rationale for Turkey to consider modernising the Customs Union following the UK–EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement. These findings support the general view in the literature that the Customs Union has brought about a structural transformation in Turkey's foreign trade.

However, as noted in the study by Yıldırım and Dura (2007), A Review of the Literature on the Effects of the Customs Union on the Turkish Economy, some studies suggest that the Customs Union did not generate the expected level of direct foreign investment inflows and that the increase in exports was largely dependent on imports. Therefore, the literature generally reveals that the Customs Union has strengthened Turkey-EU relations in terms of economic integration, but structural asymmetries and imbalances in decision-making mechanisms have limited the deepening of relations.

2.1 Changes in the Structure of Exports and Imports

When the economic effects of the Customs Union on Türkiye are evaluated, particularly in terms of changes in the structure of exports and imports, they reveal a significant transformation process. With the Customs Union becoming active in 1995, there has been a marked increase in Türkiye's trade with the European Union (EU). According to data, Türkiye's exports to the EU amounted to only USD 11.2 billion in 1995, while this figure reached USD 108.1 billion in 2022 (Göçmen, 2016; Aslan, 2023). During this period, Türkiye has become the EU's largest trading partner by increasing its export volume in various sectors, particularly industrial products (Yergin, 2022; Koltuk & Kaval, 2022). Türkiye has integrated into the EU market, particularly in the automotive, machinery, textile, and white goods sectors, and has developed export-oriented growth strategies (Erem, 2021; Şakı & Eruygur, 2021). On the import side, there has been an increase in imports from the EU, especially of capital goods and high-tech products. This situation has modernized Türkiye's production structure, but at the same time, it has increased its dependence on foreign countries. In particular, when the data is examined, it can be seen that Türkiye's total foreign trade with the EU has increased approximately fourfold during the period 1995–2023. This increase was not limited to nominal values; product diversity and the structural nature of foreign trade also changed. The shift towards more industrial products in exports has also accelerated Türkiye's integration into global value chains. It is noteworthy that Türkiye's position as a supplier to the EU market has strengthened, particularly in the field of ancillary industrial products. However,

despite this positive picture, Türkiye still has a deficit in high-tech products in its foreign trade with the EU. While a large part of imports still consists of high-value-added technological products, exports are concentrated in the medium-low technology segment. For this reason, the transformation in Türkiye's foreign trade structure must evolve into a more qualified structure not only in terms of quantity but also in terms of quality and content. Otherwise, the advantages provided by the Customs Union will remain limited.

The table below shows Türkiye's foreign trade with the EU by year.

Table 1: Türkiye's foreign trade with the EU by year (Billion $)

Year	Exports to the EU (Billion $)	Imports from the EU (Billion $)	Total Foreign Trade (Billion $)
1995	11,2	18,3	29,5
2005	41,5	47,5	89,0
2015	63,8	78,1	141,9
2023	104,3	97,6	201,9

Source: TÜİK, compiled from Eurostat data (TÜİK, Eurostat, 28.08.2025)

2.2 Sectoral Impacts

At the sectoral level, the effects of the Customs Union are clearly visible in the automotive and white goods sectors. These sectors have been integrated into the EU's production chain thanks to the Customs Union, thereby encouraging international brands to invest in Türkiye. For example, companies such as Bosch, Arçelik, and Vestel have benefited from this process and gained a competitive position in the EU market (Göçmen, 2016; Erem, 2021). The textile and ready-to-wear sectors have gained a competitive position with their low labor costs and geographical proximity advantage. However, over time, competition with low-cost producers such as China has become more difficult, and modernization has become imperative in these sectors. On the other hand, during Türkiye's customs union process, some traditional industries have weakened due to increased competition, leading to employment problems in some regions (Aslan, 2023; Koltuk & Kaval, 2022). In terms of import structure, there has been a significant increase in imports of high-tech products, particularly from EU countries. While Türkiye's imports from the EU amounted to USD 18.3 billion in 1995, this figure rose to USD 97.6 billion in 2022 (Göçmen, 2016; Yergin, 2022). However, Türkiye's continued trade deficit in high-tech products significantly hinders the modernization of its production structure (Göçmen, 2016; Erem, 2021). This can be attributed to Türkiye's export structure, which is generally concentrated in the medium-low technology segment. Therefore, in order to fully benefit from the advantages provided by the Customs Union, Türkiye's foreign trade structure needs to become more qualitative in terms of quality and content (Aslan, 2023; Şakı & Eruygur, 2021).

In addition, the services and agriculture sectors remain outside the scope of the Customs Union. The exclusion of the services sector, which accounts for approximately 60% of the Turkish economy, stands out as one of the fundamental problems hindering Türkiye's full integration with the EU (Göçmen, 2016; Koltuk & Kaval, 2022). Expanding the scope of the Customs Union to include the agriculture and services sectors is an important reform for increasing Türkiye's competitiveness (Erem, 2021; Şakı & Eruygur, 2021).

As a result, the Customs Union has led to fundamental changes in Türkiye's export and import structure, while also bringing with it certain structural challenges. In order for Türkiye to derive maximum benefit from this process of change, it needs to deepen its economic integration and address the agriculture and services sectors in an inclusive manner (Göçmen, 2016; Erem, 2021). Figure 1 shows the sectoral distribution of Türkiye's exports to the European Union. The data is based on information obtained from institutions such as TÜİK, Eurostat, and UN Comtrade. While the textile sector had a high share in 1995, the automotive and machinery sectors have grown in importance over time. As of 2023, the automotive, machinery, and chemical sectors account for the majority of exports.

Figure 1: Sectoral Distribution of Türkiye's Exports to the EU (1995-2023) (%)
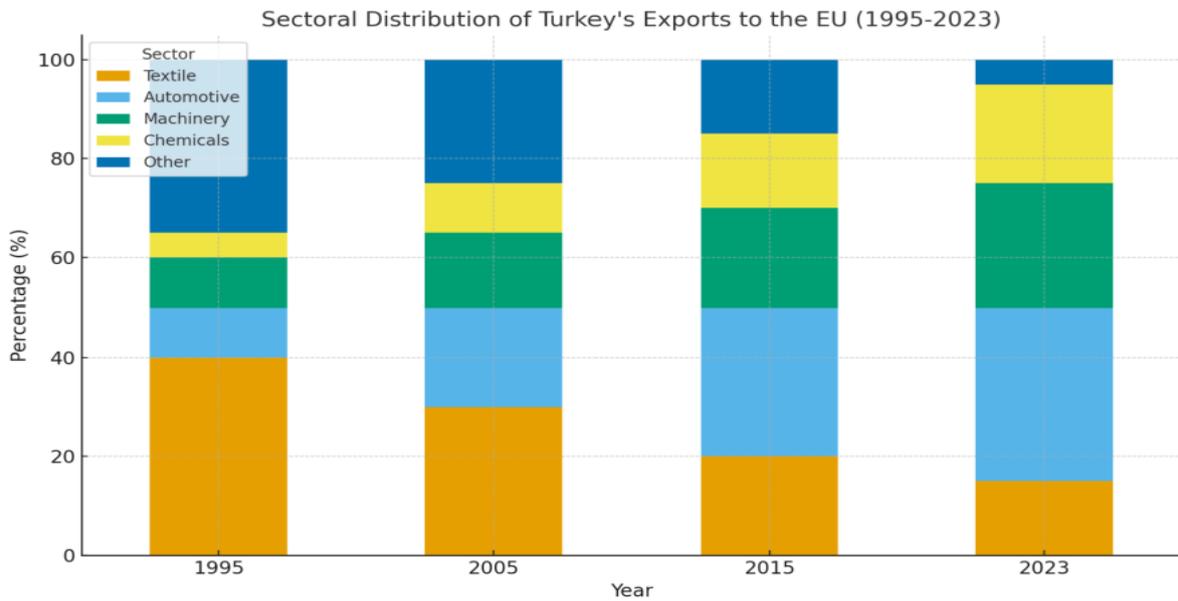
Source: Turkish Statistical Institute Foreign Trade Statistics (TÜİK): https://data.tuik.gov.tr, Eurostat: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat, UN Comtrade Database: https://comtrade.un.org

3. PROBLEMS OF THE CUSTOMS UNİON

3.1 Exclusion from Decision-Making Mechanisms

Within the framework of the Customs Union, Türkiye must comply with EU trade policies but is not involved in the decision-making processes. This situation creates a serious gap in Türkiye's sovereignty. Türkiye is not a party to the Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) signed by the EU with third countries. This facilitates the entry of third-country goods into the Turkish market with customs reductions, while preventing Turkish products from entering the same countries on favorable terms. Although Türkiye has repeatedly communicated this asymmetrical structure to the EU, no permanent and fair solution to this problem has yet been found. This situation limits Türkiye's room for maneuver in trade diplomacy. Furthermore, while areas such as the digital economy, sustainability, and the service sector are prominent in the EU's new generation FTAs, Türkiye remains limited to the narrow scope of 1995. Being excluded from decision-making processes sometimes causes political distrust in Türkiye's relations with the EU. A political structure incompatible with the depth of economic integration has emerged. This problem has undermined Türkiye's trust in the EU and encouraged Türkiye to seek global

alternatives. Türkiye's shift towards Asian, Middle Eastern, and African markets in recent years can be evaluated within this framework (Bardakçı, 2024).

3.2 Exclusion of Services and Agriculture Sectors

The scope of the Customs Union is limited to industrial products. However, in modern economies, the driving force of growth is increasingly shifting to the services sector. A similar situation applies to Türkiye. The services sector accounts for approximately 60% of the Turkish economy. However, the exclusion of this sector from the Customs Union is one of the main problems hindering Türkiye's full integration with the EU. Over the past 20 years, the EU has made significant progress in areas such as competition rules, consumer rights, digital services, and environmental standards for the services sector. Türkiye has not been able to participate in these processes, and therefore, the sector has not been standardized with Europe. Similarly, the agricultural sector has not been included in the Customs Union. This situation both limits Turkish farmers' access to EU markets and delays the process of catching up with technology and quality standards in agricultural production. While EU countries support their agricultural policies with heavy subsidies, Türkiye is watching this process from the outside and losing its competitive edge. This situation also poses risks in terms of rural development and food security. In particular, due to reciprocal quota applications, high customs duties, and technical barriers in agriculture, free trade between Türkiye and the EU cannot be achieved. This negatively affects both producers and consumers. The exclusion of services and agriculture reveals that the Customs Union is an outdated structure shaped by the conditions of 1995. Its scope must be expanded to keep pace with the economic dynamics of the new era.

4. NEED FOR UPDATE

The entry into force of the Customs Union Agreement (CUA) in 1995 marked a significant turning point in Türkiye's trade relations with the European Union (EU) and added depth to these relations. However, considering today's trade dynamics, it is clear that the current structure of the CAA is not compatible with today's conditions. It is stated that Türkiye's foreign trade with the EU as a percentage of GDP fell from 89.6% in 1995 to 63.4% in 2023. This decline stems not only from economic factors but also from many other factors, such as Türkiye's relations with new trading partners and political tensions with the EU (Larch et al., 2020; Homeyer et al., 2022). The need for an update must be assessed not only on economic grounds but also for strategic reasons. As the EU seeks reliable partners in global supply chains, it needs to deepen its relations with countries such as Türkiye, which have high production capacity and are strategically located. In this context, updating the Customs Union could both give Türkiye renewed momentum in its EU process and contribute to the development of new partnership models in line with the EU's strategic autonomy goals.

Figure 2: Türkiye's Trade with the EU as % of GDP

Source: World Bank Open Data (2025) https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NE.TRD.GNFS.ZS?locations=TR , Macrotrends (2025) https://www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/TUR/turkey/trade-gdp-ratio

5. FUTURE PERSPECTİVES

The future of Türkiye-EU relations will be shaped not only by commercial but also by political decisions. The need to update the Customs Union is a critical step toward increasing Türkiye's participation in EU decision-making mechanisms. Remaining outside comprehensive mechanisms such as the new generation Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) signed by the EU with various third countries leads to asymmetrical imbalances in Türkiye's trade diplomacy (Lippert, 2021; Anholt & Sinatti, 2019). This situation creates disadvantages in the import of products entering Türkiye's market and reduces the chance for Turkish products to compete in these markets (Aytuğ et al., 2016; Mahrukh, 2022). An updated GBA is crucial for ensuring Türkiye's integration in strategic areas such as the digital economy, services, agriculture, and sustainability (Altay, 2024; Nguyen, 2022). The EU experienced internal cohesion problems during the post-2004 enlargement process and put the full membership process with Türkiye on the back burner. This situation weakened Türkiye's interest in the EU and strengthened its multilateral foreign policy tendencies. Nevertheless, the depth of economic ties has made the parties interdependent. As of 2023, the EU is still Türkiye's largest export market and largest source of investment. This shows that economic relations cannot be separated. In the new era, it is essential to develop Türkiye-EU cooperation in areas such as green transformation, digital economy, supply chain resilience, and energy security. Integration in these areas could bring new models that go beyond the Customs Union to the agenda. It is also important for Türkiye to be able to conclude agreements parallel to the FTAs conducted by the EU outside the Customs Union in order to pursue a more independent and multifaceted trade policy. This will be possible with the reform of the Customs Union. Furthermore, Türkiye's participation in decision-making mechanisms will also strengthen the political dimension of the process. This could contribute to building trust between the parties and lead to a revival of the membership perspective. Ultimately, the future of the Customs Union depends on the parties presenting not only an economic but also a strategic vision. This vision should establish an institutional framework to manage mutual dependence.

5.1. The Search for a New Paradigm in Türkiye-EU Relations

Both Turkish and European experts agree that the Customs Union is no longer sustainable in its current form. Therefore, Türkiye-EU relations require not only technical updates but also a strategic and structural paradigm shift. This paradigm shift is directly linked to the transformation of global trade. In particular, the European Green Deal claims to fundamentally change the EU's trade and production policies. If Türkiye fails to integrate into this process, it will face new barriers to exports to the EU, such as carbon taxes. This situation will challenge Türkiye not only environmentally but also economically and competitively. Digitalization is another critical dimension in the search for a new paradigm. Issues such as e-commerce, digital services, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and data transfer require cooperation models that go beyond the traditional Customs Union approach. Bringing Türkiye's digital infrastructure into alignment with the EU has become not only a technical but also a strategic necessity. In the EU's search for reliable partners, the role of countries with strong production capacities, such as Türkiye, is gaining importance. Updating the GBA is a necessary step for the EU to achieve its strategic autonomy goals and deepen its relations with Türkiye (Müftüler-Baç, 2021). One of the main objectives of this update process should be for Türkiye to develop its cooperation with the EU in areas outside the scope of the GBA (digitalization, green transition, etc.) (Coremans, 2019). As the EU seeks to overcome the challenges it faces in today's global trade by forming innovative and strong partnerships, Türkiye's strategic location and young population play an important role in this process. The updating of Türkiye's relations with the EU encompasses not only economic dimensions but also multidimensional issues such as security and energy (Sztorc, 2022; Turan et al., 2019). Furthermore, Türkiye having a greater say in decision-making processes will contribute to building trust between the two sides and increase the sustainability of the Customs Union in the future (Abazi & Adriaensen, 2017; Phinnemore & İçener, 2016). In conclusion, updating the Customs Union Agreement will not only strengthen Türkiye's economic relations but also increase the mutual benefits it provides by deepening its strategic cooperation with the EU. This may also contribute to managing instability in the EU's neighborhood. Reforms to the Customs Union as part of Türkiye's multidimensional foreign policy strategy will positively impact not only Türkiye's trade relations with Europe but also its global trade relations (Gök, 2019; Richter & Wunsch, 2019). Issues such as migration, security, defense industry, and energy policies also form the new axis of Türkiye-EU relations. Especially after the Russia-Ukraine war, Türkiye's geopolitical position has regained importance, becoming indispensable for the EU in terms of energy corridors and logistics routes. In the process of integration with the EU, not only normative alignment but also the rebuilding of mutual interest relations is necessary. Türkiye should not remain merely in the position of a "candidate country"; it should develop equitable and mutually beneficial relations with the EU as a regional power. In this new paradigm, there are numerous areas where Türkiye can contribute, including its young population, technology production capacity, regional influence, and crisis management skills. The EU, in turn, must develop a more flexible and inclusive integration strategy that takes this contribution into account. In short, a multi-layered integration model that goes beyond the technical boundaries of the Customs Union and encompasses political, technological, and environmental dimensions should take shape as a new paradigm in Türkiye-EU relations.

6. CONCLUSİON

The Customs Union Agreement has served as a lever in Türkiye's industrialization process, playing a significant role in modernizing the production structure, diversifying exports, and raising quality standards. However, the limited scope of the agreement and Türkiye's exclusion from decision-making processes have led to economic and political problems over time. This situation has weakened the sustainability of the Customs Union and made updating it inevitable. In particular, the lack of integration in new-generation areas such as services, agriculture, the digital economy, and environmental sustainability limits Türkiye's global competitiveness. This necessitates the development

of new trade strategies for Türkiye. An updated Customs Union will strengthen not only trade relations but also the investment environment, technology transfer, consumer rights, and sustainable development. This could encourage Türkiye's structural reforms. At the same time, by updating its relations with Türkiye, the EU can deepen its integration with a reliable partner in an unstable environment. This would yield not only economic but also geopolitical gains. Türkiye, for its part, could restructure its relations with the EU not only around the axis of membership but also within the framework of multi-layered and dynamic cooperation. This would also be a strategy consistent with Türkiye's multi-faceted foreign policy approach. Ultimately, updating the Customs Union will not only provide mutual benefits to the parties; it will also serve as a lever to reshape the future of EU-Türkiye relations.

6.1. Policy Recommendations and Future Perspectives

Updating the Customs Union is not merely a technical reform, but also a matter of strategic vision. It is crucial for Türkiye to take an active initiative in this process, make comprehensive diplomatic preparations, and adopt a multi-stakeholder approach. First, Türkiye needs to make public-private sector cooperation more effective. Industrialists, exporters, SMEs, and digital startups should play an active role in this process; training and adaptation projects should be accelerated, particularly in the areas of carbon footprint, digital trade, and the service sector. EU funds and technical cooperation should be considered opportunities in this regard. The government should establish common platforms in negotiations to update the Customs Union and prepare strategic documents in collaboration with NGOs, universities, and think tanks. A balanced roadmap should be determined that takes into account the priorities of the EU side but also protects Türkiye's national interests. The main goal should be for new agreements with the EU to cover simultaneous participation in FTAs, the services sector, agriculture, and public procurement. Furthermore, increasing Türkiye's role in decision-making processes should be accepted as a requirement of the principles of sovereignty and equality. In this new perspective, a coordinated foreign trade strategy should be developed not only for the EU market but also for emerging markets such as Africa, Central Asia, the Gulf, and the Balkans. It is vitally important for Türkiye to adopt a multidimensional foreign trade policy while integrating into the EU in terms of economic diversification. In this period of increasing protectionism in global trade, rule-based and predictable relations are more valuable than ever. Therefore, the Customs Union update will serve not only an economic function but also a legal and political assurance function. Finally, Türkiye's adoption of a reformist perspective in this process will accelerate not only its relations with the EU but also domestic economic reforms. A comprehensive renewal of the Customs Union will be a major step towards integrating Türkiye not only into Europe but also into the global economy.

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