

Making of Dracula: On war, myth, legacy

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OPINION

HAKKI ÖCAL

Make that peace, Mr. President!

» THE WHOLE world knows Israel will veto Washington's peace deal with Iran. Yet Trump is desperate to shut this war down. As the Turkish saying goes, "If you spit upward, you hit your moustache; if you spit downward, you hit your beard." In other words, you are on the horns of a dilemma. It's either the millions of dollars the Israel lobby pours into Republican midterm campaigns (and the millions Israeli American Miriam Adelson funnels into your coffers) or the millions of voters who believed your promise to make America great again but who may now boycott elections, or even switch parties, in disappointment.

It is called "racially polarized voting," which is determined primarily not by the voter's race or other socioeconomic characteristics, but by politicians' lies, shortcomings and overall lack of a political backbone.

Even the U.S. House of Representatives is trying to take its hands off the Gaza, Iran and Lebanon wars the Zionists enmeshed Trump with. PAGE 9

OPINION

MEHMET DİNÇ

Tobacco industry sells illusion but Green Crescent offers way out

» THERE is a bitter irony in the history of tobacco. Jean Nicot, the man who helped introduce tobacco to Europe, gave his name to nicotine, the very substance that would later trap millions of people in addiction.

What was once marketed as a plant of healing has become one of the world's most lethal consumer products. Today, tobacco has found more modern disguises: freedom, style, rebellion, technology and even self-expression.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), tobacco kills more than 8 million people every year. Lung cancer remains one of its deadliest consequences. Exposure to secondhand smoke also turns one person's habit into a health threat for many others.

Yet tobacco remains one of the most normalized causes of preventable death. It is sold at street corners. It appears near schools. It lingers at cafe entrances, playgrounds, hospital gates and public spaces. It is treated as a private habit, although its effects are deeply public. PAGE 8

Israel kills another Palestinian baby

Tel Aviv's limitless inhumane war in the region continues, as a recent attack shot dead a 7-month-old Palestinian baby and wounded his parents in the occupied West Bank, while another round of overnight attacks killed 10 Gazans



Fahd Abu Haikal carries the body of his 7-month-old baby, Sam Fahd Abu Haikal, who was killed in an Israeli attack, at the Abou Heisheh Mosque, Hebron, occupied West Bank, Palestine, June 6, 2026. (AFP Photo)

ISTANBUL - DAILY SABAH

» ISRAELI troops shot a 7-month-old Palestinian baby in the face, killing him instantly, and wounded his parents when they shot at a car in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian Health Ministry said Saturday.

The Israeli military claimed that its soldiers shot at the vehicle perceived to be accelerating toward them near

Hebron on Friday. It said an initial inquiry found that the three Palestinians wounded were uninvolved civilians.

Israeli military activity and settler violence against Palestinians have surged in the territory since the war in Gaza began in October 2023.

The baby's father, Bethlehem University Lecturer Fahd Abu Haikal, told The Associated Press that a bullet struck the windshield before piercing his right

hand and striking his son and wife in the back seat Friday evening. Another bullet struck the hood, according to AP journalists who saw the car.

The bullet passed through Sam Fahd Abu Haikal's face.

"He was the entire world," Haikal said of the boy, who turned 7 months Friday.

The mother was in critical condition, with shrapnel close to her heart. PAGE 10

Israel's multi-front war comes with heavy costs

» THE STAGGERING costs of Israel's multi-front war and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's vision of turning his country into a "Super-Sparta" of the Middle East are driving up the defense budget and raising fears of cutbacks in education and health care.

The total cost of the attacks and involvement in a series of interconnected regional conflicts after Oct. 7, 2023, stood at 405 billion shekels (\$138 billion) as of late April, according to the governor of the Bank of Israel, Amir Yaron.

"That's a huge figure, more than 17% of GDP (gross domestic product)," he said during a recent economic conference in Herzliya, north of Tel Aviv.

Just the military campaign against Iran, which began with a wave of U.S.-Israeli strikes on Feb. 28, incurred an additional cost of 35 billion shekels for the state up until a cease-fire took effect on April 8, according to an initial estimate by the country's Finance Ministry.

Following the adoption of the 2026 budget in late March, the government noted the Defense Ministry's budget had more than doubled since October 2023, when Tel Aviv escalated attacks on Gaza.

To support the war effort, the government borrowed heavily in international markets in 2024 and 2025.

It has reached the point where public debt now accounts for more than 69% of GDP, compared to 60% before the war, according to the Treasury.

Taxes and social security contributions have also increased.

Israelis are "paying twice" for the war, said Esteban Klor, an economics professor at Jerusalem's Hebrew University.

The first cost, he told AFP, is via the decline in government social spending and reduced investment in public services resulting from several successive "across-the-board" budget cuts, even as "we are ... increasing the debt."

"Education will suffer, the quality of infrastructure will decline, as will the performance of the health care system," he said.

The second cost is to economic growth, though this has been less visible as the Israeli economy overcame the initial shock of the war. GDP had returned to its 2022 level by 2024, and it continued to grow. PAGE 4

Türkiye, Georgia, Azerbaijan eye stronger co-op with key meeting

» THE 10TH edition of a tripartite meeting of foreign ministers of Türkiye, Azerbaijan and Georgia will be held in Istanbul today.

Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan will host Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov and Georgia's Maka Botchorishvili.

Foreign Ministry sources said yesterday that the meeting will focus on a review of cooperation between the three countries and future steps to improve joint work. The meeting's agenda includes regional developments, foreign policy issues, cooperation

in the South Caucasus, reinforcing transportation, connectivity and regional transit networks, energy security and deepening commercial and economic relations, the sources said.

At the meeting, Fidan is expected to highlight the rising strategic importance of the South Caucasus at a time of geopolitical uncertainties, increasing economic fragility and security challenges, and a trilateral cooperation mechanism between the three countries serving as a significant and solution-oriented platform promoting stability and welfare in the region. PAGE 7

Pashinyan aims for normalization with Ankara as Armenia goes to polls

» ARMENIAN Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan was hopeful for normalization of relations with Türkiye as he cast his vote in his country's parliamentary elections yesterday.

Speaking with journalists after casting his ballot in the country's parliamentary elections, he expressed confidence that the border with Türkiye, as well as railway and road communications, will open in the near future. "We currently, fortunately, have peace with Azerbaijan. You know that we have very deep and fraternal relations with Georgia. And, of course, I expect the nor-

malization of relations with Türkiye and the establishment of diplomatic relations," he said. He also highlighted Armenia's "Crossroads of Peace" initiative, saying it could transform the region by expanding east-west and north-south transport routes benefiting Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Iran.

Armenia opened polling stations yesterday at 8 a.m. local time for voting in the parliamentary elections. Sixteen political parties and two political alliances have registered to take part in the election, including the Civil Contract, led by Pashinyan. PAGE 7

Domestic defense gains momentum in new reality

» TWO decades of state investment and support to the sector have transformed Türkiye into a major exporter of drones and other military equipment, and the NATO member is now seeking to add on that momentum as the West rears and security alliances are reshaped.

Türkiye, once heavily reliant on foreign arms makers, now supplies dozens of countries, mainly in the Gulf, Africa, Asia and parts of Europe with weapons that many buyers see as more affordable, faster to deliver and more adaptable than alternatives. As European governments reassess security dependencies following Russia's invasion of Ukraine and question the durability of U.S. guarantees, many NATO allies increasingly see Türkiye not only as a military bastion on the alliance's southeastern flank but also as a potential industrial partner.

Ankara hopes that hosting U.S. President Donald Trump and other NATO leaders at a summit next month will help expand arms sales and joint production in Western markets, particularly the European Union. PAGE 5

FETÖ links add fuel to main opposition CHP's infighting

YUSUF ZIYA DURMUŞ

» THE GÜLENİST Terror Group (FETÖ) is known for its widespread attempts to infiltrate every institution and to subdue those who oppose those attempts. When the infiltration failed, it tried to steer institutions to its will through several schemes, as numerous investigations have indicated. The group also tried its hand in influencing politics, and one such attempt is now at the heart of a debate within the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP). As the party descends into a chaotic

conflict after the reinstatement of former Chair Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu by a court verdict, accusations are hurled, people are branded "traitors" and the name of FETÖ inevitably looms large. It was Kılıçdaroğlu himself who apologized for allowing "FETÖ agents" into the party in his first address to supporters after taking over the CHP again in May. He also implied that FETÖ was still influential in the party, angering the ousted administration of Özgür Özel. FETÖ's overarching interest in the CHP goes back to at least 2010, the year a sex tape of the party's then chair, Deniz Baykal, emerged. PAGE 6

Rahmi Koç under fire as Kurdish woman 'joke' sparks nationwide outrage

» A "JOKE" told by Turkish businessman Rahmi Koç during a public event has sparked widespread criticism and renewed debate over harmful stereotypes in Türkiye.

A video of the remarks quickly circulated on social media, drawing criticism from Kurdish and Turkish voices across Türkiye as well as international observers. The backlash reignited debate over prejudices, sexism and the continued use of harmful stereotypes in public discourse.

Koç recounted the "joke" during the inauguration of a hospital in İzmir, western

Türkiye. In the story, a medical doctor asks a "Kurdish woman" to undress behind a curtain for an examination, only for her to allegedly reply that the doctor should undress first. The audience responded with laughter.

For many critics, the controversy extends beyond a single joke. They argue that the story derives its humor from portraying a Kurdish woman as incapable of understanding a simple medical instruction, reducing both an ethnic identity and a gender to stereotypes for "comedic effect." PAGE 3