

## **The USA and the Marshall Aid as Reflected in *Amerikan Sargısı* (American Bandage) by Fakir Baykurt**

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**Abstract:** This paper is an attempt to analyze how American involvement to Turkey through the Marshall Plan is ironically and satirically explored within the eyes of the villagers in Fakir Baykurt's novel *Amerikan Sargısı* (American Bandage). The novel is set in an important era in Turkish history where the Democrat Party rules and the Marshall Plan, officially named as the European Recovery Program. He keeps reminding nationalism and the value of national sources including the culture and values. For this reason, he uses the local dialect to emphasize the importance of maintaining national identity and protecting being Turkish from a risk of dissolution in the American culture. In this paper, the major ideas of developmentalism and dependency theories help explore the novel. In the paper, a brief theoretical look with the Marshall Plan and the Party era is presented with a discussion of the novel under the light of these two theories.

**Keywords:** *Amerikan Sargısı*, Fakir Baykurt, developmentalism, dependency, the Marshall Plan.

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### **Introduction**

This paper attempts to explore Fakir Baykurt's novel *Amerikan Sargısı* (1967) (American Bandage/bondage) through the ideas of developmentalism and dependency theories. The main purpose of this study is to reveal how America and the Marshall Plan are considered by a Turkish author regarded as the voice of the Turkish villagers. It is assumed that the exploration of the novel reveals Baykurt's perception of how the real inhabitants of a village near Ankara have reacted to being made the guinea pigs for an American 'pilot project' conducted in their midst. It might also have a potential to understand perspectives of Turkish people towards the issue since there has not made much scholarly criticism on this matter through literature. Fakir Baykurt (1929 -1999), born Tahir Baykurt, was a Turkish author and trade unionist. He worked as a teacher for a while before working as an inspector for the government. As being a leftist author, he emphasizes the importance of being independency and thus he reflects his ideas within this perspective in the novel.

The novel *Amerikan Sargısı* displays how the USA is actually regarded by the Turkish public, as opposed to the claims in which the Marshall Plan and the USA are promoted as a savior for the aid recipient countries. Undoubtedly the success of the Marshall Plan cannot be denied, since the USA contributed to the recovery of post-war Europe, which rose to its pre-war level in a short period of time. However, the new world order established after the Second World War brought with it the concepts of the developmental economy and the dependency relationships. By means of foreign aid, the construction of a new world order and decolonization were fostered by controlling the newly aided regions, including Turkey. It was these efforts at development on which Baykurt clearly expressed his opposing ideas. He saw it as a threat to Turkish cultural and economic independence seeing that the American economic assistance was welcomed by some in Turkey at that time. He foresaw the possible results of the plan and thus he continued to emphasize nationalism and the value of national sources, including the culture and values. For this reason he used the local dialect to emphasize the importance of maintaining national identity by protecting all aspects of Turkishness from dissolution in American culture.

The Marshall Plan, also known as the European Recovery Program or European Reconstruction and Development Plan, was named after Secretary of State George C. Marshall. In 1947, he made a speech at Harvard University during which he announced the plan. From 1948 through 1952, the Plan assisted 16 countries in their economic recovery and gave them over \$13 billion in aid to finance them. The immense destruction that had occurred during the Second World War caused such an urgent need for financial and military support. Although Turkey had followed a policy of neutrality during the war and succeeded in remaining outside it, the country's economy suffered as a consequence of the impacts of the war, and was in great need of support from the recovery program. Hence, Turkey was included in the Plan later. The mobilization declared during the war resulted in the lack of labor on fields and therefore production had reduced considerably. Turkey faced a famine, and many goods were bought or sold on the black market, which provided better prices than the government for the farmers.

Beside the war-related economic problems, there was another problem both for Turkey and the USA. Namely, the Soviet pressure and claims on Turkey. It was believed that the US was concerned about Soviet pressure on Turkey, who they feared might turn to the Soviet Union and join the socialist/communist regime.

The US, therefore, did not wish to alienate Turkey. Under the Truman Doctrine, the US aimed to extend aid to Turkey for her industrial development, giving emergent priority to Greece first (Akçakaya, 2011: 81-2).

Fakir Baykurt wrote *Amerikan Sargısı* in 1966 in Ankara while he was working as an inspector for the government. The novel ironically depicts the USA's efforts to help the underdeveloped countries through the Marshall Plan aid. It generally criticizes the implementations of the American aid project, which he thinks not appropriate for the Turkish society. It emphasizes that any attempt aimed to help Turkey develop should be done so in accordance with Turkish culture and conditions, not American.

Baykurt begins his novel by expressing his ideas and feelings about the USA. Introducing the States to the readers, he remarks that American society lives with a constant anxiety of a possible attack on their country at any moment. He talks about the industrialists, including Henry Ford, who are against the revolutionist ideas and movements. They did not hesitate to murder the workers who complained and protested horrible and unfair working conditions. These people also had a role in the exile and killing of the Native Americans. He asserts that President Kennedy was murdered because he wanted peace, and that this was against the interest of a certain group of people.

One of the main characters is Melih Dalyan, a businessman in Ankara. He became rich by shipping Turkish mines to the States. He cooperates with the States as a part of the Marshall Plan. He negotiates with Mr. Borger, who is a high-ranking bureaucrat and a representative of the Plan. The issue of the meeting is reconstructing and developing the villages in Turkey. They think that delivering powdered milk to kids is not enough. Some suggest to fly American flags in the coffee shops in the villages or to give them turkeys as a gift. Finally Mr. Canata, who is Turkish, tells them to conduct a more lasting and effective project. According to this project, they start to work on a pilot village nearby Ankara named Kızılöz.

The villagers in Kızılöz are not aware of their plans are suffering from poverty but still happy to earn their living honestly. The protagonist Temeloş is the watchman of the village. He is a strong character and not compliant. He welcomes the American guests thinking they will only visit their village not knowing they have a project in their minds. The fate of the village changes with a group of 70 people coming there. In the beginning they are surprised, but immediately show hospitality to their guests. The local administrators accompany the Americans bureaucrats, who ask the villagers if they need anything. They reply that they require nothing. They say that the Turkish government is going to give them whatever they need, and they do not need help from any other country. However, Temeloş asks them to flatten the hill in the village. The Americans turn this area into a garden and construct a large gate on which they write "Turkish-American Friendship Garden". They even change the name of the village from Kızılöz to *Güzelöz*, because the Americans are uncomfortable with the connotation of the word *Kızıl* (red) and its associations with the Soviet and communism.

As part of the project, chickens, cows, animal feed, seeds, agricultural machinery and methods are brought from the States. In this way, they plan to reconstruct all the villages in Turkey and thus Americanize them. Some of the villagers are happy about this at the beginning, but with time they realize that these new implementations are not suitable with Turkish geography and agricultural traditions, and thus Turkish culture. Temeloş is a leading figure complaining about these new changes. The mukhtar İzzet, the head of the village and the teacher Cemal share the same unsatisfactory feelings with Temeloş. They think that the best way of helping the villagers is to raise awareness and give them a proper education in all fields. Cemal, for instance, warns them that they might lose all underground treasures since America processes Turkish mines, sell them abroad even back to Turkey and earn great amount of money. However Americans and some local authorities who become Americanized try to squelch objectors like Cemal. Another teacher Ertan Bey is not like Cemal. He serves Americans and therefore earns a fortune by searching for mine beds instead of teaching at school. Since Cemal is an opposer, he is relegated. The whole village becomes so much upset by his leaving there for this reason.

The project proves to be unsuccessful, all the animals die and the pineapples do not flourish. During a fight that breaks out between Temeloş and Danacı Arif, a watchman appointed by Americans, Temeloş is seriously wounded and taken to hospital. Temeloş feels alienated not belonging to the village because he is not let in the garden by his fellow. The doctors try to apply an American bandage, but Temeloş insists on having a Turkish dressing. Meanwhile back in the village, the villagers begin an uprising and destroy everything that has come from America. They change the name back to *Kızılöz*.

### **The Rise of the Democrat Party and the Plan**

The Democrat Party wins the election due to the problems caused by the Second World War and the one-party government that lasts decades. As mentioned before, the mobilization keeps all men away from the fields and thus production decreases. The public put all blame upon the one-party government, the Republican People's Party. The economic, agricultural and political problems in this post-war period help the Democrat party be seen as a savior. From 1950 up to 1960, the Party ruled Turkey when the Marshall Plan and the Truman

Doctrine are on the headlines in the country. Mechanization in the agricultural sector by the help of the aid funds and the increased number of tractors meant a kind of revolution with vital changes in the economy. All these changes begin to happen in the 1940s.

During the period of time between 1950 and 1960, the newly accepted liberal economy is only observed in the agricultural sector because Turkey accepts one basic condition: to base the development model upon agriculture not industry. Thus, by determining the obstacles in the sector, they focus on solving and improving them. So, the primary emphasis is given to modernizing Turkey's agrarian structure throughout 1948-1952. Last two years of this period the Democrat party participated in the program. While modern machinery, as well as modern farming methods is introduced, foreign investment, private enterprises, credits and loans entered in the country's economy. Undoubtedly the Marshall Plan helps not only Turkey but also Europe recover in economic, political and societal terms. However, all these changes and improvements are not always welcomed by many in Turkey: by some writers like Fakir Baykurt, they are seen the USA's attempt to colonize Turkey.

Since Turkey's economy is based on agriculture not industry, the recovery program focuses on the agricultural development. Mechanization in agriculture, the USA, will foster Turkey's industrial development as well. Machinations of irrigation are given importance and a great number of heavy tractors are supplied and hectares of land are taken into a plan for irrigation to improve agriculture. Transportation is also given priority in the program because it provides transporting raw materials and productions from one part of Turkey to the other. Therefore, railways, roads and ports are improved, which is called as the rise of a new system of mobility. In 1946, there were not more than 1.000 tractors that could hardly run, while in 1955 the number increased upto 43.000 (Keyder, 2008: 162). The state-owned and state-built railroads are now ruled by Western system expedited the country's invasion as Perin E. Gürel asserts (2017). She continues that "in 1948, the final foreign railroad line was nationalized. Yet, around the same time, Turkey's transportation policy took a US-directed shift, intended to integrate the country into the capitalist system in line with the Marshall Plan... These highways and motor vehicles soon became some of the most visible symbols of US-accented modernization" (Gürel, 2017: 98). American-brand tractors pushed through the Marshall Plan a symbol for literary protest, as well.

That period of aid time observes the Democrat party era. The party conducts a liberal economy successfully during the first quarter of its government. While a rapid development is observed in Turkish economy, indeed, Turkey increasingly depends on foreign sources, debts borrowed, legal and political policies like foreign investment revealed as economic dependence and a threat to Turkish freedom and nationalism. It can be asserted that Turkey goes under the control of the USA.

The agriculture, transportation, mining and defense constituted the main parts of the aid program which led the way to the dependency relations with the USA. Gabriel Ignatow argues that "the economic dependence of developing nations on wealthier nations and international lending intuitions can substantially affect public opinion within developing nations" (2006: 648). Fakir Baykurt unlike some scholars like M.J.Hogan (1987), Wexler (1983), Gimbel (1976) and Ertem (2009), who approach the Plan positively, implicitly criticizes it. He shows the other side of the coin. Most of the time, literature is a mirror which reflects the social realities of the time in which it is written. Baykurt's novel reveals how America is seen through the eyes of the public as much as the author considers. It depicts his and his people's awareness of their country's dependency on foreign investment and loans. Through developmentalism and dependency theories the novel can be best evaluated and account for how the economic processes through the Plan influence public opinion.

### **The Novel under the Light of the Theories of Developmentalism and Dependency**

Developmentalism, an economic theory, focuses on economic growth of the Third World countries. The idea of this theory is generally referred to as a post World War II phenomenon (Erik S. Reinert, 2010: 1). The ideology of developmentalism takes a number of different forms. The Soviet Union calls it instituting "socialism", later calls "communism". The USA calls it "economic development" according to Immanuel Wallerstein (1974). The US global expansionism and domination of the world find a place in developmentalist idea. The aid is a practical result of this concept by the developed country. Burcu Birinci states that "developmentalism is invented to transform traditional societies into modern societies. This perspective accepts the other as 'tradition' and has a superiority claim on it as a hegemonic system" (2007,18). Then, ethnocentrism makes up the core of this perspective. Kelley Johnson points out that "the biases and limitations of developmentalism and the Washington Consensus can be summed up with one word: ethnocentrism. The assumption is that if the West's sequence of development worked for them, then it should work for other societies, too. Developmentalist theorists ignored the "culture" variable, which proved to be a damning error" (2010: 37). The same error is observed the result of the aids in the novel. The villagers demolished everything Americans built and made and even the bandage Temeloş is dressed with. He wanted to heal his wounds with

something Turkish not American. This is a symbolic irony used to show the aid's damage to Turkey. Temeloş's knee is injured by a guard's American sneakers. Bobby drives him to the American hospital in Ankara. They use dressing and American bandage on which there is the same image of the Turkish-American handshake. This image is on everything including the powdered milk cans and pineapple trees garden gate.

The Marshall Plan gave big amount of money and resources into European countries. "Germany, for instance, is able to recover economically and grow stronger socially and politically. However, the theorists failed to recognize that redeveloping was easy for these countries that had already developed prior to World War II" (Johnson, 37). Turkey, unlike Germany, as Baykurt depicts, is not able to develop as the nation is unhappy with the changes provided by the Plan. Samuel P. Huntington argues that quick economic and social change creates instability rather than stability and democratization (1997: 38). The villagers are eventually unhappy with the quick and nonnative changes. Even the title of the novel is noteworthy to show this unhappiness: "American Bandage" is a material for dressing or splint not made in Turkey. Temeloş is restless to wear such foreign material: a different cultural one, he believes, cannot properly heal the wounds.

As a result of the Marshall Plan, Turkey becomes dependent on the US economically and politically. Dependency theorists argue that there is an important relationship between dependency and developmentalism. Don Santos clarifies such situation of the aid recipient countries within the dependency theory: "a situation in which the economy of certain countries is conditioned by development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected" (1970, 231). These concepts are argued through periphery-center terms, introduced by Raul Prebisch in the 50s and later used by Myrdal, Cardoso, Frank, Don Santos, Amin, and a number of others. The center or core as Immanuel Wallerstein asserts (1974) is referred to the developed nations like the USA, while the periphery is Turkey. Samir Amin states that with the foreign investment, it causes a big problem: "foreign capital is invested not in local production designed for the local market but in producing for the external market (1974, 160). His view is elaborately illustrated in the conversation among the villagers when they see the Americans extract mines in the area and send them to the USA to produce related goods. The narrator satirically states:

*Since Turkey and America are best friends ever in the world, they do a favor and obtain our mines. They want the poor in the town to get rich...They ship all mines they find and obtain to the States and come back the same ship full of goods cheap there but expensive here...This ambition for the mine is American's not ours. They will keep us away from cultivating and leave us unemployed. In fact, when you fall down to the ground, embrace the earth because lords do not give you what a land of one acre gives (AS. 103).*

The author reflects the ideas of the dependency theory, which is basically an idea that it radically criticizes the relations between the center and the periphery countries. It is grounded on imperialism and asserts that the covert purpose of the foreign aids including the Marshall Plan is to enslave them within their own economic grip, dominate and exploit them. The novel is a critique of these relations within the theories mentioned. Baykurt shows that the plan does not work as expected and turns out to be unsuccessful. The novel depicts how American aid cannot meet its promises and turned Turkey into an unsuccessful attempt because America neglects the local conditions and culture. What's worse, the villagers strongly react to American acculturation attempts.

The setting is a village in Kızılöz, Ankara that America conducts her plans to create a modernized little American model. It is a typical Turkish village with its people having a traditional agricultural way of living. However, American efforts for the model village project fail and eventually the villagers demolish all US buildings and burn down all American crops and pine apple trees even the fields where American seeds are used to plant. The imported chickens lay only empty eggs and the pineapple trees do not bear fruits. In addition to this, the pineapple trees are tropical plants not native to Turkey. Turkey's climate is not suitable for it just like the American attempts to create a new Turkey. The bare eggs, seeds and trees are metaphors to suggest the bareness of the foreign aid in this country. They clean up everything American in the village and rebuild the hill with the ashes and the remaining from the fire. Baykurt suggests that there is no financial and political benefit in the American aid but damages in all aspects. Some of the villagers tend to behave against their cultural values when they see the American representatives are having wives and mistresses. The tendency to degeneration worries the author saying also the feelings of some villagers who visit the USA. They are taken to a church and introduced the American's religion and way of life but the narrator is so much restless for their intention of acculturation, saying:

*They want us to forget about our traditions and values and convert to theirs and be like them. Is this possible? Who will do it? No way, nobody will do it even Hadji Kadir. (125)*

He indirectly warns his people not to be westernized. Being westernized might eventually lead the villagers to degeneration and lose their roots and origin.

Baykurt foresees the danger in the future describing the villagers' lack of access to their own lands. They are even not allowed to enter the garden where they the pineapple trees and the coop full of chickens imported from the States. He points out his predictions by focusing on the Turkish government selling control over Turkey's lands to the Americans in the form of mining rights. Gradually Turkey would lose her independence and national strength. The villagers, in this sense, are disturbed by so-called friendship. Therefore they ironically keep calling Americans as "the Turk's American friends" worrying about being under the sway of them. Baykurt reflects cynicism toward this false friendship:

*Izzet said, "We knew Our Aktepe (hill) area became The Garden of Friendship, in fact it is not. They made it American Garden, but we should have known it in the very beginning!" (AS, 184).*

It can be assumed that he points out America's covert intention of imperialism with the so-called friendship and continuous his cynicism that Turkey is not the only country for them. Mr. Canata, the American expert and representative, is finished with the project in the village and now will go to Jamaica. He says:

*I am going to Camayka (Jamaica in the local dialect). I will work there..." That is to say, they will make it friend now! In this way, they will make the whole world friend...(AS. 178).*

Baykurt uses "friend" as a metaphor suggesting American invasion through the aid plan and sees it as a part of the new world order. He is worried about the country to be colonized by the States as seeing the other countries suffered from the similar threat and the possible results due to it.

### **Conclusion**

The Marshall Plan is still the subject of much discussion, and its effects have also taken the attention of the scholars mentioned before in the current paper. The majority of the studies on this issue are mainly focused on Germany and Great Britain: there is less research that has been carried out in the Turkish context. The literature review has revealed that the Plan had had a great healing impact on the postwar economic, political and agricultural reformations of the recipient countries. Regarding the implementation of the Plan in Germany and Great Britain, M. J. Hogan (1987), Wexler (1983) and Gimbel (1976) approach the issue from the economic and political aspects. In Turkey, many scholars have also dealt with the matter from the same aspect, usually underlining the positive impacts of the Plan. For example, Erhan (1996) points out that the US had made a great contribution to the economic development of European countries. More recently, Ertem (2009) discusses the reasons which pushed Turkey to ask for the aid and the positive result ending in an economic development and a new agricultural and economic structure.

*Amerikan Sargısı*, however, uses allegory and irony to criticize the heavy dependence on American aid, with a fear that it could lead to the country's invasion. Both the Republican People's Party and the Democrat Party are found guilty for not being sensitive of Turkey's future. Feroz Ahmad states that "the rulers are criticized for lacking the determination to preserve the country's true independence" (1993, 141). It is in such an atmosphere that Baykurt seems to feel obliged to raise the Turkish public's awareness of the possible consequences of foreign aid. His worries can be understood well when we look at the novel in the light of the theories of developmentalism and dependency, which have been discussed earlier in this paper. Turkish agriculture, transportation, defense system and the foreign investment had fallen into the hands of the foreign aid tools. The novel mainly reflects anti-American, in fact anti-foreign, feelings across the country. Baykurt, for this purpose, uses allegorical tone and metaphors to criticize the penetration of foreign capital which will turn Turkey into a compliant ward of the American sovereignty. Toward the end of the novel, a collective hindsight is observed. He uses it as a didactic lesson for the readers: to appreciate one's own sources and strength. As part of the project supported by the Marshall Plan, chickens, cows, animal feed, seeds, agricultural machinery and American methods are brought from the States. In this way, they think that they will reconstruct all the villages in Turkey and thus Americanize them. However, most of the villagers are happy about this at the beginning, but with time they realize that these new implementations are not suitable with Turkish geography and agricultural traditions, and thus Turkish culture.

The emphasis on nationalism is reflected throughout the novel. Foreign aid, like the Marshall Plan, functions as a means of economic development and the globalization. *Amerikan Sargısı* shares the same idea with Amin, who suggests that "the only way for peripheral societies to develop is they must sever all ties with the (capitalist) centre" (1976: 210).

The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan from Baykurt's perspective are explained quite differently from the literature on these concepts. His criticism is directed only at a small group of rich industrialists, not the whole American nation. Baykurt defines this system and the Marshall Plan in the introduction part of the novel:

*Later, in the election they (the trusts) made people put into office Harry Truman, who is cunning like a fox and meek like a domestic cat. And they began to carry out his doctrines and plans. They attempted to renew their (third world countries') defense systems, military uniforms, combat vehicles and armament by deluding the poor countries with experts, funds and equipments. The poor countries are becoming armed at an extraordinary speed. They kept 25% or 35% of their budget for defense and left no budget for other services. The countries in which the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan penetrated are storing and storing battle wares produced by these trusts as if they went barking mad.*

Baykurt's definition of the Plan, in fact, summarizes the purpose of this paper. His dissatisfaction with the foreign investment and aids is vividly depicted. He notably allegorizes the fact that an important outcome of the Marshall Plan is that Turkey has to pay a price for it. In order not to pay an irreversible price, his characters in the novel destroy everything the Americans build according to the covert aims of the Plan as Baykurt asserts. Baykurt uses Temeloş, the watchman and the protagonist, as an opposing voice to indicate and warn the Turkish society that Americans coming to the village are not "saviors". Temeloş sees them as the enemy when they first visit them. Baykurt's other characters are American-sided and do not give any importance or sensitivity to Turkish interests. In this way, the author tells the reader that there may always be people who care about their own interests more than those of their own country.

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