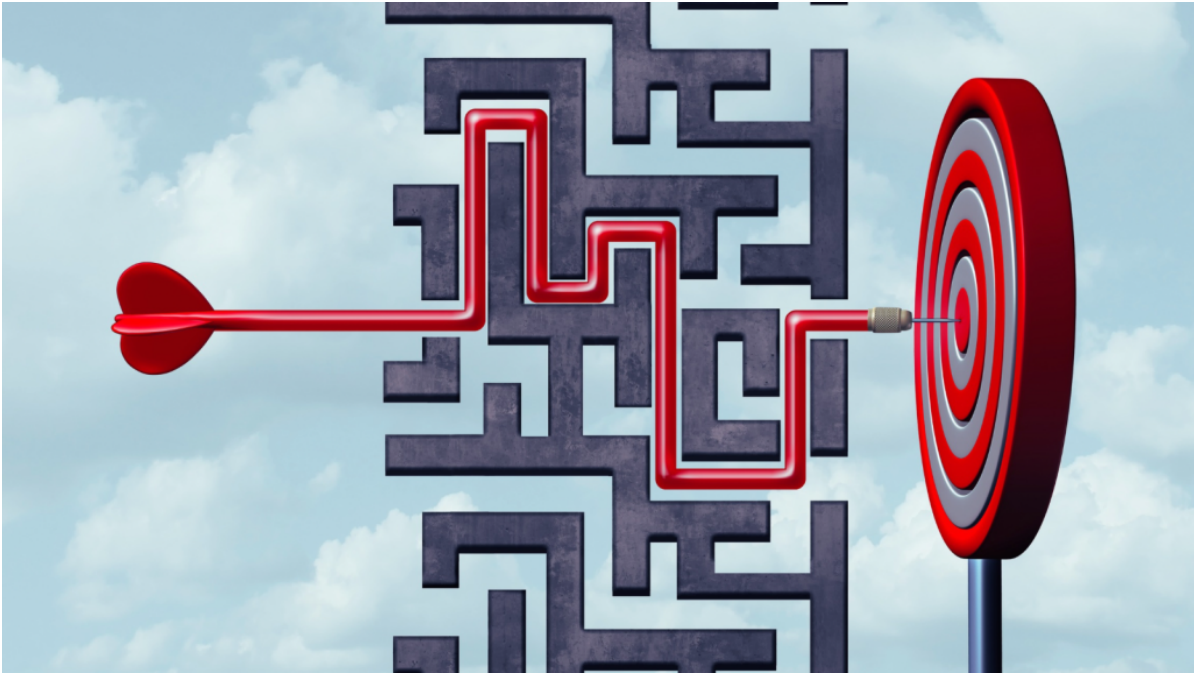


# To Divide or Not to Divide: A Dilemma of Our Times - Mehmet Ögütçü



The fear of division is not merely a modern concern; it echoes from the deep corridors of history. Many nations today are gripped by this fear, as old wounds resurface and new threats emerge. For Türkiye, the memory of the Sèvres Syndrome stands as a stark reminder—a lingering belief that external powers, particularly the West, continue to harbor designs to divide the country. Even as Türkiye stands firmly within Western military alliances, the perception persists that these powers support separatist groups like the PKK, fueling terrorism and encouraging rhetoric aimed at fracturing the nation. This perception is both an internal anxiety and an external threat.

Russia's historic aspirations for control of the Straits, Eastern Anatolia, and access to warm seas still haunt the Turkish consciousness. Syria, despite its current turmoil, has not abandoned its claims on Hatay, a territorial dispute

dating back to 1938. Greece's Megalo Idea—its grandiose ambitions regarding Türkiye and Cyprus—though outdated, still resonates. Meanwhile, Armenia's historical claims over lands in Eastern Anatolia are enshrined in its constitution, while separatist movements along Türkiye's borders with Iran and Iraq remain ever-active, sometimes fueled by hostility from their host countries.

No external power can divide Türkiye under ordinary circumstances. Yet, when the nation shows signs of weakness, lacks unity, struggles economically, or succumbs to ethnic nationalism, it becomes vulnerable. In times like these, vigilance is paramount. This is not the moment for complacency, especially as discussions of a potential Third World War circulate. While we often point fingers at "dark foreign forces," it is crucial to recognize that many of our problems stem from internal shortcomings—insufficient resources, lack of foresight, and ignorance.

### **Why Do Nations Seek to Divide Others?**

History is replete with the collapse of great empires—the Incas, the Urartians, the Phrygians, the Persians, the Ottomans, and the Austro-Hungarians, to name a few. When a nation's power threatens the interests of its rivals, efforts to weaken or divide it often follow as part of grand geopolitical strategies.

A nation's division or weakening rarely happens overnight. It is typically the result of decades, even centuries, of careful strategic maneuvering by rival powers. We have witnessed this across the globe. Major powers such as the United Kingdom, France, Russia, and the United States have honed these tactics over centuries, employing methods ranging from armed conflict and economic sanctions to technological manipulation and diplomatic intrigue.

Today, we see the West attempting to divide and control not only the Russian Federation and China but also the Middle East, the Balkans, and Africa. The creation of Israel is a clear testament to such ambitions. And, ominously, some

speculate that after Iran, Türkiye may be next on the list.

Of course, powers like China, Russia, and Iran are not passive. They too seek to weaken the West, sow discord, and exert control over buffer states in pursuit of their own strategic interests.

## **Lessons from History**

Of the 17 Turkish states that have existed, from the Huns to the Ottomans, 16 have been relegated to the shadows of history. This painful reality compels us to remember the Treaty of Sèvres and to prepare alternative scenarios for Türkiye's future, considering the next fifty years.

One refrain often heard is, "Let's protect this last Turkish state; let's not allow its division or destruction."

After World War I, the collapse of great empires gave birth to new states and redrew the global political map. The Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, Russian, and German empires were dismantled by treaties imposed by the victors, reshaping not only political borders but also the ethnic and religious balances in affected regions—tensions that persist to this day.

The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire led to the formation of the Republic of Türkiye, while much of the Middle East and the Balkans splintered into new entities. The political structures established during this period were designed to facilitate resource exploitation.

## **The Strategies of Division and How to Overcome Them**

Nations seeking to divide others often exploit ethnic and religious differences, sowing discord within societies. The key to countering such efforts lies in fostering unity, ensuring equal rights for all citizens, and promoting policies that combat discrimination and extremism.

Economic sabotage is another method, with external powers targeting key industries and financial systems. To resist such attacks, Türkiye must prioritize domestic production, enhance cybersecurity, and diversify its economy.

Misinformation campaigns, especially through social media, are also potent tools of division. Combatting disinformation requires public awareness, independent media, and robust digital defenses.

Lastly, external powers often provide support to separatist movements and militant groups, aiming to incite civil conflict. Strengthening border security and regional anti-terrorism cooperation is crucial to thwarting these efforts.

## **A Look to the Future**

As we look ahead, it is clear that more states may fragment in the coming decades, particularly in regions rife with ethnic tensions and social unrest. Iraq, Libya, and Syria are prime examples of countries already experiencing division. Similar scenarios may unfold in nations like Iran, Russia, and even the United States, where internal conflicts simmer just beneath the surface.

The future of global geopolitics remains uncertain, but one thing is clear: Türkiye must remain vigilant, united, and resilient against the forces that seek to divide it. By learning from history and strengthening its internal cohesion, Türkiye can ensure that it remains whole, standing tall amidst the shifting tides of world politics.



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