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Confronting the Armenian Genocide

Looking Backward, Moving Forward

Richard G. Hovannisian
editor



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Reconstructing the Turkish Historiography on the Armenian Massacres and Deaths of 1915

Fatma Müge Göçek^d

“A Muezzin’s Summons to Prayer”

*On a July night replete with peace and repose, a darkness descends to the ground;
And to the sky at once raises a sound:
It is the muezzin’s voice, summoning to prayer the Muslims all around,
Atop a white minaret he calls, divine love within abound.*

*Blending into the shore’s breeze, they journey on together,
And that penetrating voice, slowly ascends layer upon layer,
Then into the world of eternity, it wanes and disappears
All along with the sweetly caressing morning breeze.*

*Oh, that muezzin’s voice! Lost in far away lands...
That prayer wanes by the moment, but the feeling left inside intense,
Yes, such a prayer, loaded with mystery and despondence,
Raises at times and then, replete with sadness, fades into the distance.*

*Confessions of a sad and pale heart this prayer beholds,
To me it appears sometimes as my weeping inner voice,
Yes, such a voice, longing to leave all sadness in the winds’ embrace!...*

*And what’s done is done; right then all slowly unfolds,
Yes, in my heart arrive and settle peace and repose,
Happiness and relief fill me inside, peace my whole existence envelops,
Because he wept for me tonight, for my sadness and sorrows...*

This poem was written by Hraçya (Hrachia) Surenyan, also known as the poet Armen Dorian. Born in Sinope in 1892, Dorian first attended the Pangaltı Mekhitarist School and then the Sorbonne University in Paris.¹ At the age of twenty-one, he composed exclusively in French to become one of the founders of the pantheist school of poetry. After his return to Istanbul in 1914, he died at the age of

twenty-three in Anatolia, where he had been sent in accordance with the Ottoman Decree of Relocation in 1915.

Dorian's poem clearly demonstrates how, for centuries, the Armenians and Turks lived and shared a world together and made that world theirs by imbuing it with particular meanings. The poetry of the summons to prayer demonstrates how the young poet had found in the muezzin's call an emotion he could make his own. He must have felt all the more betrayed to be first accused of sedition and then killed by the same Muslims about whom he wrote. And the same Muslims destroyed so much of a rich world of meaning Dorian had helped create. I chose to start my chapter with this poem not only to mark the tragic and timeless death of a gifted poet but also to emphasize the rich world that Turkish society so senselessly lost as a consequence of the Armenian massacres of 1915.

Contemporary Turks are only now being introduced to the literary world of the Turkish Armenians through recent translations into Turkish of works by authors such as Hagop Mintzuri,² Antan Özer,³ Yervant Sirmakeşliyan,⁴ and Krikor Zohrab.⁵ Reading for the first time the novels, short stories, and poetry that these Turkish Armenians produced inevitably reveals to a Turkish audience how a world replete with meaning was lost with the massacres of the Armenians, leaving behind a culturally impoverished society. Yet, the Turkish people unfortunately are unable fully to acknowledge, understand, and mourn the tragic demise of the Armenians because of the policy of the Turkish nation-state that denies the Armenian massacres of 1915. I maintain that the mourning so necessary also for the Turks can only commence if the Turkish historiography on the events of 1915 is freed from the hegemony of the Turkish nation-state and contextualized within a larger historical framework.

I argue here that Turkish historiography on the Armenians can be viewed within three historical periods that contain distinct narratives. These are as follows:

1) *The Ottoman Investigative Narrative* based on accounts of the time pertaining to the Ottoman Armenians, including the Armenian deaths of 1915, published either by the Turkish state or by opposing political groups;

2) *The Republican Defensive Narrative* based on the works, often published or kept in circulation by the Turkish state, that have been written with the intent to justify and prove the nationalist master

narrative of the Turkish state, which explicitly denies the allegation that an Armenian genocide occurred;

3) *The Post-Nationalist Critical Narrative* found in works that are directly or indirectly critical of the nationalist master narrative but with a few exceptions do not focus specifically on the Armenian massacres. Their concern is much more with the silence in contemporary Turkish society pertaining to its history and resultant ethno-religious composition.

Reading the events of 1915 within this framework can create a new space for a different Turkish interpretation, one that would ultimately recognize the depth of the Armenian tragedy.

The Ottoman Investigative Narrative on the Events of 1915

Works in this category are composed of the memoirs of Ottoman officials such as Said, Kamil, and Talat pashas, Mehmed Asaf, and Dr. Reşid Bey,⁶ the investigative records of the postwar military tribunals that tried persons accused of perpetrating the massacres,⁷ the official reports prepared by the Ottoman state such as the one by Hüseyin Nazım Pasha,⁸ the petitions of groups associated with the postwar Ottoman government,⁹ the accounts of the Turkish negotiations of the Treaty of Lausanne,¹⁰ and the collections of documents published by the Turkish nation-state ostensibly from the Ottoman state and military archives to deny the genocide allegations.¹¹ Each work is reviewed in detail in a larger book project, but here I shall merely outline the general patterns of meaning I discern in these publications that make up the Ottoman investigative narrative.

My reading of the works issued during the Ottoman period on the Armenian relocations and deaths reveals that two characteristics distinguish the Ottoman investigative narrative from others. First, since all of these works were originally written around the time of the events of 1915, they do not question the occurrence of the Armenian "massacres" (genocide was not a term then employed) but focus instead on the question of what happened and why. Later, however, as the temporal distance between the events and the scholarship increases, the events become distant memories and the narratives of both the Republican and post-nationalist periods concentrate more on the meanings that the events acquired rather than the events themselves.

Second, the Ottoman investigative narrative reveals a very strong tension between two world views. Some of the authors maintain a more traditional Ottoman imperial view and regard the existing structure of empire as just and the problems of the Armenian subjects within it as resolvable. They also blame the events of 1915 on both the errant Armenian subjects and corrupt Muslim officials. Other authors, however, display a more "proto-national" state view and perceive the existing structure of the empire as inadequate and the position of the Armenian subjects within it as problematic. While they are not quite clear about how to deal with the situation, they give priority to the preservation of the state and its Muslim element over all other concerns and justify their actions accordingly.

The central tension of the Ottoman investigative narrative emerges over the attribution of responsibility for the crimes. When reviewed chronologically, the memoirs of Ottoman officials reveal a transformation in the assumption of responsibility as the later ones, more and more imbued with proto-nationalist sentiments, shirk from the charge of perpetration of crimes against the Armenians. The tension over responsibility mounts especially after the Ottoman defeat in World War I, when the Treaty of Sèvres between the Allied Powers and the Ottoman Empire makes the Armenian tragedy a reason not only to detach Ottoman lands having significant minority populations but also to establish an independent Armenian homeland extending into eastern Anatolia. During this period, the Ottoman state acknowledges what happened and publishes as supplements to the semi-official newspaper *Takvim-i Vekayi* the proceedings of the Ottoman military tribunals that tried some of the perpetrators. Yet the advent and eventual victory of what became known as Turkish War of Independence nullified efforts of the Allied Powers to bring the perpetrators to justice. With the triumph of nationalism, the newspaper issues that contain the records and verdicts of the military tribunals begin to disappear, to such a degree that at present no complete set exists in any Turkish public library.

Soon after the suspension of the military tribunals, especially during the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish nation-state, the responsibility for the crimes gradually shifts from the perpetrators to the victims. The first Ottoman official report addressing the events of 1915 cites the seditious activities of the Armenian revolutionary committees and the atrocities against the Turks (even though

these occurred much later in the eastern provinces) as a way to justify the Armenian massacres and deaths. Significant in this shift is the strong connection between the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP; Young Turks), which rationalizes the Armenian tragedy as an unfortunate consequence of the need to protect the Ottoman state, and the Turkish nationalist movement, which gradually adopts this Unionist position as its own. The Ottoman state documents published by the Turkish nation-state repeat this same argument. And this argument in turn continues to subsist in an even more essentialized and radicalized form during the subsequent Republican defensive narrative that begins to be articulated in the 1950s.

The intervening thirty years before the emergence of the Republican defensive narrative are crucial in understanding the current stand of the Turkish nation-state in view of the fact that the connection between Ottoman and Turkish rule has never been extensively documented and studied. The Republican rhetoric dismissed, and still dismisses, any connection with the Committee of the Union and Progress, which lost the Ottoman Empire. Yet the works in this category, especially the military tribunal records, clearly demonstrate the strength of the connection between these two political entities in terms of the transfer of wealth, ideology, and personnel. Many of the organizers and perpetrators of the Armenian massacres escaped to Anatolia in order to evade Allied attempts to bring them to justice. Those perpetrators who evaded apprehension by the Allies as well as the silent participants in the massacres simply stayed in their locations and threw in their lot with the burgeoning nationalist movement. Once the oppositional struggle in Anatolia commenced and assumed the form of an independence movement that eventually triumphed in establishing the Turkish nation-state, the former perpetrators, some of whom now occupied significant positions in the nationalist camp and had become the patriotic citizens of a new country, could no longer be accused because there was no political entity left to indict them. The Allied Powers had retreated, the reigning sultan had been deposed, and the empire was now defunct.

The new nation-state and its leader, Mustafa Kemal, could not take a stand against the perpetrators who had become comrades in the struggle and who initially were needed in sustaining the new state. But Mustafa Kemal understood that it was essential to have his country recognized by the Western powers, which still took issue

with what occurred during the Unionist leadership, and was anxious to win credit for the establishment of a nation-state (actually built through the resources provided by the Committee of Union and Progress). He therefore eventually took a public stand against the Unionists, denied his CUP credentials, liquidated those Unionists who challenged his authority, and exalted his passage to Anatolia on May 19, 1919 as the starting point of the War of Independence leading to the Turkish nation-state and its international recognition in the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.

The treaties of Sèvres and Lausanne also become important historical landmarks in the discussion of the Armenian deaths and massacres of 1915 because the former confirms and the latter ignores them. Even though it initially could have been possible to have equity and also preserve the basic aspirations on both sides through reforms, this unfortunately did not happen due to a number of factors, including the conflicting viewpoints among the Ottoman officials about the necessity, applicability, or sustainability of such reforms, frequent diplomatic intervention by the Western powers about the execution of the reforms, as well as the impatience of the Armenians. While the reforms strove for the security of life, family, and property, the eventual polarization of the two groups strengthened, on both sides, the positions of those initially fringe groups that advocated the creation of separate independent nation-states. In the Treaty of Sèvres, the Armenian massacres helped establish the conditions for an Armenian homeland reaching into Anatolia. Even though for the Armenians the Sèvres treaty was a certificate of "rebirth" that accorded them a political entity that they could call their own, one that would establish their own country, the Muslim Turks interpreted the same treaty as a death sentence that guaranteed their disappearance as a political entity. As a result of these different interpretations, the two communities took different courses of action. The Armenians relied on and cooperated with the Allied Powers to attain their promised homeland and to bring to justice the perpetrators of the massacres. For their part, the Muslims of Anatolia, who now began to define themselves with a new, once radical, identity, that of "Turk," which had not been embraced by the Ottomans because of its exclusivity and limited scope, started to fight against the same Allied Powers and the Armenians.

The Turkish War of Independence culminated in victory largely because of Allied withdrawal of support for the Armenian cause. This success was predicated, however, on the injustice that the Unionists committed against the Armenian people in the name of a proto-nationalist ideal. First, they physically removed the Armenians from their homeland and eventually settled in their stead Muslim refugees (*muhajirs*) both from the Balkans and the Russian Empire. In doing this, they irreversibly altered the population composition of Anatolia. Second, the Unionists decimated the Armenian population through the massacres, traumatized and dispersed them in such a manner that it made it virtually impossible for them to reunite against the Turks as a coherent political and military entity. And finally, the Unionists capitalized on the property and goods left behind by the deported Armenians and utilized these resources to mobilize and finance an army and a populace that were supportive of the nationalist cause.

When the Unionists emerged victorious in the subsequent War of Independence under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, they started to justify their anti-Armenian measures as a tragic but necessary move for the preservation of the Turkish state. Contrary to the Sèvres treaty, which awarded the Armenians a homeland and was tantamount to a death warrant on the Ottoman Empire, the subsequent Lausanne treaty signed by the Turkish nationalists guaranteed them a new state and a homeland. That very homeland was established in significant measure at the expense of a projected homeland the Allied Powers had set aside for the Armenians. In signing the Lausanne treaty, the Allied Powers allowed their immediate interests to take precedence over their pledges to the Armenians. The Armenians themselves were sapped of the strength required to realize their claims. As a consequence, the Lausanne treaty now brought political death to the Armenians.

Hence, the Sèvres and Lausanne treaties offer totally contradictory solutions to the Armenians and the Turks, also reflected in the subsequent narratives that the two sides formulate. Discussion of the Sèvres treaty psychologically unnerved the Turkish nation-state and brought back memories of the insecurity and impending doom felt before and during the War of Independence. The Lausanne treaty, on the other hand, was for the Turkish nation-state one of birth, celebration, and joyousness. It was a reminder of the pride and glory

felt when Turkish envoys went to the very Europe that had shamed the Turks through frequent political intervention and the ultimate shame of occupation of their core lands after World War I, a shame experienced for the first time in their six-hundred-year history. This was then linked with the increasingly nationalist contention that the Turks were the only people who could claim possession of this last vestige of the Ottoman Empire as their own. As the victorious Turks signed the Lausanne treaty, they finally declared as theirs what they now imagined had been their national homeland since the beginning of time.

Yet the Armenians had exactly the opposite experience. The contemplation of the same Sèvres treaty kindled hope and joy among the Armenians, brought back memories of when they almost gained a homeland of their own on lands they had inhabited from time immemorial. This treaty took them back to an era when they had flourished financially and intellectually, when they had produced a new generation educated with the European ideals of freedom and liberty. They stood to inherit a homeland where they could create a brand new, advanced, civilized nation-state, one that would have brought back their proud ancient civilization that had been a cradle of Christianity. The Lausanne treaty produced the opposite effect on the Armenians, however, as it reminded them of the final destruction of their dreams of that ideal homeland where they could have brought out the best in their culture and civilization and created a collective future for their sons and daughters. The possibility of such a homeland is categorically denied by the Turks who instead established for themselves the nation-state desired by the Armenians. The Turks succeeded at the expense of the Armenians, with the wealth that had been confiscated from them and from the energy sapped out of the lives of the Armenian children who instead of growing to flourish in their homeland were tragically destroyed.

Both of these narratives contain much sorrow, for each has been constructed at the expense of those who lost their lives. Many scholars have noted how Western imperialism aggravated this suffering. I would argue that the role of another social actor, that of nationalism, needs to be emphasized time and again in contextualizing the Turkish and Armenian narratives. I contend that nationalism caused the Armenians and the Turks to polarize and challenge each others' existence, instilled in them the idea that they each had a primordial

right to create a homeland filled with compatriots in pursuit of the same dreams, and decreed that these ideals could only be accomplished by them alone and to the exclusion of others.

Even though I find it morally unproductive to discuss who suffered more—because I think that posing the degree of human suffering to establish rights only increases the tendency to cause more suffering—let me note that nationalism caused much more physical, social, and psychological damage and eventual death to Armenians than to Turks. Because the CUP members, who espoused the concept of an imagined community of Turks, had the support of the state machinery to actualize their goals, they were able to impose death and destruction on the Armenians, who ironically and tragically were also members of the same state.

Let me now turn to the question of why it has been so difficult to sustain scholarly analyses of the tragic events of 1915. I would identify the transition from the political form of an empire to that of the nation-state as the main cause. During this transition, there briefly existed two concurrent narratives, one formulated by the same officials of the Ottoman Empire who still attempted to interpret the events swirling around them within an imperial framework, and the other by select groups, like some CUP members, who formulated a new exclusionary nationalist framework and forcefully strove to shape events by any means necessary to achieve their envisioned homeland. Their ideology also produced a new sense of empowerment and entitlement, preyed on deep-felt resentment among the populace, and enabled them to follow their objectives with intense zeal.

From the standpoint of the present, I think it is unfortunate that the latter nationalist vision prevailed. While both Armenians and Muslims of the Ottoman Empire had coexisted in relative peace in an imperial system that did not treat them equally, this inequality had been part and parcel of the social system for so long that most groups that challenged this inequality did so within the imperial framework. But the concepts of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution helped spark an alternate vision of society, that of nationalism, and an alternate political structure, the nation-state. The Ottoman Empire became one of the many testing grounds of both this nationalist outlook and the political structure it sought to create. This test brought with it a strong sense of empowerment and entitlement to transform everything in order to realize a so promising and

so liberating alternate vision. It came to appear almost natural to exclude, remove, or destroy anything or anybody not fitting into this construct. The world had to fight and suffer through two very bloody world wars in the twentieth century to comprehend clearly the destructiveness embedded in this way of thinking.

How were these two concurrent narratives during the transition from Ottoman Empire to Turkish nation-state reconciled to produce the Republican narrative? The emergence of a Turkish "nation-state" on the ashes of the Ottoman Empire precluded discussion of any claims of the homeland the Turks now identified as their own. It was no accident that Mustafa Kemal declared, and the Turks constantly reiterate, that there is not "a hand-span of the soil of the motherland"¹² to be relinquished. What Mustafa Kemal had forcefully articulated was shared by those who had no qualms then or have none now "to fight for the motherland until the last drop of blood."¹³ The willingness of people to sacrifice themselves for a vision demonstrates both the ideological strength of nationalism and its incredibly destructive power. As those willing to chance self-destruction have no intention of taking that risk alone, they beckon their compatriots to join them, and they define a target, a clearly specified group of human beings who differ from them according to their own definition, to annihilate in the process.

This nationalist tone dominates the Republican defensive narrative. In this regard, a significant historical occurrence has colored the Republican narrative. After the Armenian massacres and deaths in 1915, the period of Russian and Allied occupation of parts of the central Ottoman lands, both directly and also through the Greeks, was marked by massacres committed by Armenian armed groups. These groups were joined by their coreligionists who had become polarized by atrocities committed against their people, so they sided with the occupying forces, took up arms, and perpetrated new atrocities against the Muslim Turkish populace in some locations. Armenian massacres of Turks in the eastern provinces in 1918 are central to the Republican narrative.

The other defensive element on which the Republican narrative has capitalized was provided by the murders of Turkish diplomats around the world in the late 1970s into the 1980s by the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA). This attempt to draw attention to the Armenian Genocide, when combined with

the Turkish nationalist rhetoric, polarized Turkish public opinion not only against ASALA and Armenian claims but unfairly also against all Armenians. The only liability of these diplomats was that they were representatives of the Republic of Turkey. They had no direct connection to the Armenian deaths of 1915 other than being officials of the Turkish nation-state founded on what could have been the Armenian homeland. I think that these murders demonstrate the harmful effect that nationalism had on the Armenians themselves. The violence presented Republican Turkey with the opportunity to include, in a nationalist move, the avenging of these deaths in its narrative. The murders only strengthened the Republican resolve to resist the Armenian claims and further strengthened the resolve to continue a total denial of the organized Armenian massacres of 1915.

The Republican Defensive Narrative on the Events of 1915

The works in this category emerge largely as clusters of analyses within the nationalist paradigm. Two works in 1953 that comprehensively cover the previous material on the Armenians¹⁴ are then selectively drawn on by the second cluster of works written with direct or indirect state support in the 1970s and 1980s in reaction to the ASALA murders.¹⁵ The third cluster since the 1990s either reproduces the same arguments that were made in the 1970s and 1980s or attempts to offer a new perspective while remaining within the nationalist paradigm.¹⁶ Among these perspectives are efforts to provide oral histories of Turkish survivors of Armenian massacres in the east,¹⁷ to locate the Armenian Question within Western diplomatic history,¹⁸ or to identify and exclude from Turkish politics everyone of minority origin.¹⁹ Two recent works must be cited separately. The first emerges out of an Islamist critique of the secular Republican thesis,²⁰ but fails to escape the nationalist paradigm with the exception of two articles which inadvertently provide new historical information on the failure of the Ottoman state in undertaking reforms.²¹ The other work provides a psychoanalytical approach to the contemporary trauma of the Armenians but does so at their expense and without bringing in the role of the Turks.²²

The Republican nationalist narrative on the Armenian deaths of 1915 traces the origins of the tragedy to the intervention of the Western powers in the affairs of the Ottoman Empire and justifies the Armenian relocations and subsequent massacres as the result of the sub-

versive acts of the Armenian revolutionary committees. This narrative does not recognize, on the one hand, the significance of the preexisting structural divide in Ottoman society among the social and ethno-religious groups and its institutionalized Muslim superiority and, on the other hand, the fact that Turkish nationalism was one of the many nationalisms that emerged and was no more just than any other but just happened to triumph at the expense of all others.

This non-recognition cloaked by a Turkish nationalism identifying the preservation of the Turkish state at all costs has led the Republican state to assign the entire moral responsibility for the Armenian massacres and deaths to everyone other than the actual perpetrators. As a consequence of this non-recognition, in the Republican narrative the Armenian victims themselves have tragically and ironically emerged alongside the guilty Western powers as the main culprits. Any feeble attempt to assign blame to the Turkish perpetrators is immediately dismissed in this narrative with the defense that what happened was an unfortunate but necessary act for the preservation of the "state."

If one reviews these works chronologically to depict patterns of meaning, no significant studies on the Armenian deaths and massacres appear until the two works by Esat Uras and Y. G. Çark in 1953, and when they appear they do so with declarations of loyalty to the Turkish nation-state at every opportunity.²³ There is then another gap until 1976 when the scholarship that does appear is even more strongly dominated by Turkish nationalism. Its authors not only pledge allegiance to the Turkish nation-state as loyal citizens, but also employ historical knowledge selectively to preserve Turkish state interests at all costs, including that of critical scholarship. These two significant chronological gaps in the scholarship on the Armenian massacres and deaths of 1915 warrant further examination.

Why were there no works during the first thirty years of the Turkish Republic on the important social and moral issue of the Armenian massacres? I think the first thirty-year gap after the foundation of the Turkish Republic in relation to an event that was so crucial and central to the period immediately preceding it was caused by several factors. In addition to the general trauma and devastation of the war years that everyone in Turkey must have wanted to put aside, it is likely that the close link between the Unionist leadership, which

not only funded the War of Independence but in large measure also staffed it,²⁴ and the connection of the same leadership to the Armenian deaths, prompted the founders of the Turkish nation-state to employ a nationalist Republican rhetoric to silence discussion of the Armenian issue.

Another reason was that by 1926 Mustafa Kemal had effectively eliminated those CUP leaders he regarded as a potential threat to his rule. The only ones who managed to survive were those who declared and proved their personal loyalty to the person of Mustafa Kemal by turning against their former comrades. Some Unionists who were labeled as particularly dangerous were executed following the 1926 trials to expose and punish those implicated in an assassination attempt against Kemal. Although there was insufficient evidence, Kemal first accused all those who criticized his regime and then, with the help of those Unionists who had declared their personal allegiance to him, had them executed. Others had to go into voluntary exile to survive and were unable to return to Turkey until after Mustafa Kemal's death in 1938, and still others who remained in Turkey did so at the risk of their lives and survived so long as they retired from political life and maintained strict silence. The series of the traumatic social reforms the young Turkish Republic underwent during Kemal's reign within the format of single-party rule also precluded public discussion of significant social and historical issues. The subsequent promulgation of the laws regarding treason against the Turkish state and against the person of Mustafa Kemal rendered any discussion of the events that countered the official version subversive as well.

After Mustafa Kemal's death, the same political framework prevailed during the rule of his successor and close friend, İsmet İnönü. Even though some opponents of Kemal were now able to return to Turkey, they maintained their silence and self-censorship in tacit support of the existing regime. Both the Kemal and İnönü periods were also marked by strong Turkish nationalism that informally defined citizenship in terms of religion and ethnicity, whereby the Turkish Muslim citizens, like their Ottoman Muslim predecessors, were ascendant and all other social groups were either co-opted, marginalized, or silenced.

The transition to the multi-party system in 1948, after twenty-five years of the single-party system, and the subsequent sweeping elec-

toral victory of the Democrat Party formed in opposition to the ruling Republican People's Party (RPP) of Kemal and İnönü, initially liberalized censorship of the media. This transition also gave some RPP members like Esat Uras who retired from active politics time to write. Many memoirs of former Unionists such as Rauf Orbay also began to emerge during this period. The particular reason for the two authors, Uras and Çark, to elect to write on the Armenians in 1953 may also be a consequence of the concern felt about the strong populist and Islamic elements that had become more visible with the ascendance of the Democrat Party. The organized riots of September 6-7, 1955, accompanied by widespread looting and incidents of death against the Greek minority in particular and all minorities in general, showed that such concerns were not ill-founded.

Why was there another gap of twenty-three years until 1976? This most likely is ascribable to the 1960 purge from power of the Democrat Party by the Turkish military and the re-imposition of censorship and government control over scholarship. Yet, this state of affairs changed once again in the late 1970s because of the assassination of Turkish diplomats by the radical Armenian group ASALA in an attempt to draw international attention to the Armenian Genocide. The defensive Republican narrative became even more polarized during this period as it drew selectively on Ottoman documents and the works of early Republican writers to maintain its ascendance down to the present.

I have criticized this Republican defensive narrative for its inherent Turkish nationalism, which makes self-reflective, critical scholarship impossible. The nationalist cloak over this narrative creates the following shortcomings: the use of archival material is highly selective in that the nationalist scholars almost unanimously overlook, for instance, the records of the Ottoman military tribunals and the accounts in the contemporary Ottoman newspapers that document the massacres and deaths beginning in 1915. These scholars also assume that the pre-nineteenth century Ottoman communal relations were peaceful until the intervention of Western powers subverted the Ottoman Armenians. They fail to note that these communal relations institutionalized Muslim dominance over the minorities and the rhetoric reflected the Muslim view of those relations, not the non-Muslim ones. Even though the Western powers did indeed play a destructive role, one also needs to recognize another equally, if

not more devastating force, that of nationalism. Yet the Republican defensive narrative also makes no reference to the effect of Turkish nationalism, because this narrative is itself a product of the same nationalism and therefore lacks a critical distance from it.

The French Revolution and the social transformations it envisioned altered the expectations of all social groups, including those of the Ottoman Muslims. The frustrations of the Muslims created the social group of Young Turks and their Muslim followers who assumed power in 1908 and ultimately carried out the massacres of 1915. The frustrations, in turn, of the Ottoman minorities first generated demands for reform and, upon their failure and also upon increased Muslim aggression, escalated the communal support for Armenian revolutionary activities and ultimately the taking up of arms against the Muslim elements. While both the Ottoman Muslims and the minorities nurtured nationalist visions, the Turkish actualization of these objectives occurred at the expense of the others.

Since the Muslims had the support of the Ottoman state and the advantage of a social structure that protected their privileged position, they eventually triumphed over the minorities. Their victory was couched within the ideology of nationalism that condoned all actions undertaken in the name of the imagined community and for the sake of the nation-state. This ideology enabled the nationalists within the Ottoman state first to justify the Armenian massacres and then to join the Turkish Independence movement to create such an imagined community. The emergent Turkish nation-state in turn disclaimed its Ottoman past and the massacres in which its leaders had been implicated. The Republican scholars themselves who started to research the Armenian massacres on behalf of the Turkish state absorbed its inherent nationalism. As a consequence, they could only identify as the culprits of the Armenian tragedy the two "others" of Turkish nationalism, namely the Western powers and the Ottoman Armenians themselves.

Their interpretations of the actions of these two "others" were so colored by Turkish nationalism that they refused to see the destructiveness of the Ottoman Turks. Hence, they defended their view of the events and not only dismissed the claims of massacres but even argued that the Turks were the victims rather than the perpetrators. Only within the current post-nationalist phase has it become possible to have a more critical and self-reflective reading in a new

Turkish historiography that places blame on all social groups, including the Turks. A brief survey of the post-nationalist critical narrative of the 1915 events that has started to emerge in contemporary Turkey may point the way toward the future.

The Post-Nationalist Critical Narrative on the Events of 1915

The works in this category emerge in three disparate clusters in terms of the knowledge they demonstrate of both the Ottoman Armenians and Turkish Armenians. The first cluster is either written specifically on the events of 1915, with the intent both to understand the historical context within which the events occurred and to analyze critically the persistent Turkish denial of these events,²⁵ or to inform the contemporary Turkish reader about the historical transformation of the Armenians from the past to the immediate present.²⁶

The second cluster comprises works that are written on topics of recent Turkish history that do not focus directly on the Armenians but nonetheless provide ample new information on the historical background of the events of 1915 because, unlike the Republican narrative, they do not mute the role of the Ottoman minorities in their accounts. One scholar undertakes a meticulous historical analysis of the Young Turks to reveal how, in spite of their formal public rhetoric of Ottomanism, the CUP leaders had informally formulated very early a proto-nationalist, exclusionary stand toward the Armenians.²⁷ Another work presents a history of the first seventy-five years of the Turkish Republic that contextualizes the Armenian deportations within that formal history.²⁸ Still another work studies the activities of the Committee of Union and Progress through the records of the Ottoman military tribunals and the investigations of the Fifth Chamber of the Ottoman Parliament, which also contain much information on the Armenian massacres.²⁹ Finally, another scholar examines the CUP's relocation and resettlement policy of Muslim refugees to reveal in the process how these newcomers were resettled on lands and properties left behind by the deported Ottoman Armenians.³⁰

The third cluster includes literary works that reveal the worlds of meaning the Armenians created within both the Ottoman and the Republican periods. The Armenians emerge as cultural actors as the literature produced by them is presented by one scholar,³¹ and as the literary works of Ottoman and Turkish Armenians themselves

are translated from the original Armenian to the Turkish language.³² Another interesting recent work is a memoir by a Turkish author who recounts how his childhood memories of the Armenians in his neighborhood disappeared with their relocation.³³

The most significant factor that unites the works in this category is that none is written to defend a particular thesis or is supported for publication, in one capacity or another, by the Turkish state. They are also not colored by the Turkish nationalism that pervades the official narrative discussed in the preceding section but assume instead a post-nationalist stance. As such, these works are the products of the emerging civil society in contemporary Turkey. They are, as stated, divided into three broad categories: those specifically on the Armenian issue; those penned on various aspects of Turkish history that indirectly illuminate and contextualize the Armenian massacres and deaths within Turkish history at large; and those that are literary works, mostly novels, by Turkish-Armenian writers that are being translated into Turkish after a silence of more than seven decades.

The most significant dimension of the post-nationalist critical narrative that begins to emerge in Turkey is its willingness to recognize Turkish society, not as an imagined community of nationalist compatriots of Turks, but rather as a cultural mosaic that includes many diverse groups, such as Kurds and Alevis, as well as the much atrophied former minority groups such as Armenians, Greeks, and Jews. Turkish society at large is now involved in an exploration of these ethno-religious and social groups through the literature and historical narrative of these groups. Some societal segments have started to engage further in critical self-reflection. Islamists have begun to challenge the dominant secular nationalist writing of history through publications of many memoirs that highlight the agency of religion in Turkish history. Liberal Turkish intellectuals have, on their part, taken on the challenge of critical self-reflection about what constitutes and ought to constitute Turkish identity. These groups are willing to move beyond the narrow bounds of the nationalist cloak that places the blame for all actions on others, on imagined and fabricated threats. Some are also ready to recognize how Turkish nationalism caused great pain and suffering to the Armenians. If these evolving groups transform into a movement associated with human rights, and if they are able to overcome the resistance of the nationalist

elements embedded in society and especially in the military, then the depth of the Armenian calamity of 1915 would be recognized in contemporary Turkey.

Conclusion

Why are the world in general and Turkey in particular still not fully able to make the transition from the nationalist phase to a post-nationalist one? I believe the problem originates in the periodization of the War of Independence. It is extremely significant that the current Turkish nationalist rhetoric identifies the passage of Mustafa Kemal from Istanbul to Anatolia on May 19, 1919 as the starting point of the nationalist struggle that culminated in the establishment of the Turkish nation-state. This dating dismisses entirely the significance of the preceding historical events and interprets the nationalist movement as a spontaneous development predicated solely on the agency of a single person, Mustafa Kemal.

I would argue that discussion and recognition of the Armenian massacres and deaths of 1915 in particular, and demystification of nationalism that still cloaks contemporary Turkey in general, can only take place through the adoption of an alternate periodization. The emergence of Turkish nationalism as a significant historical force needs to be traced as far back as 1839 when the Ottoman state officially recognized the need to undertake the first in a series of political and social reforms. These *Tanzimat* reforms, initiated in 1839 and then continued in 1856 and 1876, all mark the unsuccessful attempts to incorporate the Ottoman minorities into the empire's structure on equal terms. It is my thesis that they also give rise to the first stage of "nascent nationalism" within the Ottoman Empire.

The suppression of the counterrevolution of traditionalist elements around Sultan Abdul-Hamid by the Action Army on April 25, 1909 signals the beginning of the second stage of "proto-nationalism." It is then that the CUP military officials take control of the emerging political structure in the name of state and nation. These officials assume formal control of the Ottoman Empire in a coup d'état in January 1913, thereby reaching the apex of the proto-nationalist stage. It is during this pernicious period of proto-nationalism, between 1913 and 1918, that the atrocities against the Armenians are committed and justified in the name of the new imagined state and nation. The ebb of this proto-nationalist phase comes with the es-

cape of the CUP leaders to Germany in November 1918 after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I.

The third stage of "official nationalism" commences, not on May 19, 1919 when Mustafa Kemal initiates the Turkish War of Independence, but rather on May 15, 1919 with the Allied-backed Greek occupation of Smyrna. It is then that many Turkish Muslim groups begin to mobilize throughout Anatolia with the arms, military personnel, and financial capital that the leadership of the Committee of Union and Progress had stored there for a possible future resistance movement. This third stage reaches its pinnacle not, as the Republican state argues, at the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne or the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, but rather with the Greek-Turkish population exchange of 1923-24. That exchange marks the final mass deportation of surviving Ottoman Armenians from Anatolia with the goal of achieving the imagined Turkish Muslim nation. This highpoint of nationalism is sustained until 1983, in spite of repeated political attempts in 1924 with the Progressive Republican Party and in 1946 with the Democrat Party to sever the connection between the military, which assumed the guardianship of Turkish nationalism, and the transforming nation-state. I believe that the demise of the third stage of "official nationalism" commences with the establishment of political organizations that seek support, not from the Turkish nation-state, but rather from the emergent civil society, as witnessed in the creation in 1983 of the Motherland Party, the emergence of the New Democracy movement in 1995, and the formation of the liberal Islamist party in 2001. These all attempt to withstand the state- and military-centered Turkish nationalism with differing degrees of success.

Turkey is currently at a turning point. I contend that the third stage, that of "official nationalism," is slowly coming to an end. The first sparks of the fourth stage, that of "post-nationalism," are in the making by a new generation that has come of age not during the foundation of the Republic but rather during its contestation and critique by the currents of opposition. This new generation will determine what becomes of these post-nationalist sparks. If it fails to sever the connection between the Turkish military and the nation-state, "official nationalism" will probably sustain itself for a time longer. If, however, it does break this connection and also supports, strives for, and achieves the integration of the Republic of Turkey into the Euro-

pean Union, this would open the way to the post-nationalist period in Turkey. The Armenian massacres and deaths of 1915 may be finally, formally, and officially acknowledged and find a place in Turkish historiography if and when contemporary Turkey enters that post-nationalist stage.

Notes

1. Pars Tuğlacı, *Ermeni edebiyatından seçkiler* [Selections from Armenian Literature] (Istanbul: Cem Press, 1982), p. 164 [translation mine].
2. Hagop Mintzuri, *Atina, tuzun var mı?* [Athena, Have You Got Some Salt?] (Istanbul: Aras Press, 2000).
3. Antan Özer, *Yaşamı beklerken* [While Awaiting Life] (Istanbul: Aras Press, 1997).
4. Yervant Sirmakeşliyan, *Balıkçı sevdası* [Fisherman's Passion] (Istanbul: Aras Press, 2000).
5. Krikor Zohrab, *Hayat, olduğu gibi* [Life, As It Is] (Ankara: Ayraç Press, 2000).
6. See Mehmed Asaf, *1909 Adana Ermeni olayları ve anılarım* [The Adana Armenian Incidents of 1909 and My Memoirs] (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 1982); Gül Çağalı-Güven, ed., *Kamil Paşa ve Said Paşanın anıları: polemikleri* [Memoirs of Kamil Pasha and Sait Pasha: The Polemics] (Istanbul: Arba Press, 1991); Mehmet Kasım, *Talat Paşa'nın anıları* [Memoirs of Talaat Pasha] (Istanbul: Say Press, 1986); Ahmet Mehmedefendioğlu *Sürgünden intihara: Dr. Reşid Bey'in hatıraları* [From Deportation to Suicide: Memoirs of Dr. Reshid Bey] (Izmir: Belge Press, 1982); Sait Paşa, *Anılar* [Memoirs of (Grand Vezir) Sait Pasha] (Istanbul: Hürriyet Press, 1977).
7. See 8 Mart sene 335 tarihinde irade-i seniye-i hazret-i padişahiye iktiran eden kararname ile mütesekkil divan-ı harb-i örfî muhakematı zabıt ceridesi [Turkish Military Tribunal Records] (Istanbul: Takvim-i Vekayi Press, 1919-1920).
8. See Hüseyin Nazım Paşa, *Ermeni olayları tarihi* [History of the Armenian Incidents] (Ankara: Prime Minister's Press, 1994); Erdoğan Cengiz, ed., *Ermeni Komitelerinin a'mal ve hareket-i ihtilaliyesi* [The Actions and Revolutionary Movements of the Armenian Committees] (Ankara: Prime Ministry Press, 1983).
9. See National Congress of Turkey, *The Turco-Armenian Question: The Turkish Point of View* (Constantinople: Societe Anonyme de Papeterie et d'Imprimerie, 1919).
10. See Cemil Birsnel, *Lozan* [Lausanne] (Istanbul: Sosyal Press, 1933); Bilal Şimşir, *Lozan telgrafları: Türk diplomatik belgelerinde Lozan Barış Konferansı* [The Lausanne Telegraphs: Lausanne Peace Conference through Turkish Diplomatic Documents] (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 1990).
11. See Prime Ministry Directorate General of Press and Information, *Documents* (Ankara: Prime Ministry Press, 1989); Prime Ministry Directorate of State Archives, *Osmanlı belgelerinde Ermeniler (1915-1920)* [Armenians in Ottoman Documents] (Ankara: Prime Ministry Press, 1994).
12. The Turkish term is "bir karış vatan toprağı."
13. The Turkish term is "kanımızın son damlasına kadar."
14. Y. G. Çark, *Türk devleti hizmetinde Ermeniler (1453-1953)* [Armenians in the Service of the Turkish State] (Istanbul: Yeni Press, 1953); Esat Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni meselesi* [Armenians in History and the Armenian Question] (Istanbul: Belge Press, 1953).

15. See Neşide Kerem Demir, *Bir şehid anasına tarihin söyledikleri: Türkiye'nin Ermeni meselesi* [What History Told a Martyr's Mother: The Armenian Question in Turkey] (Ankara: Hülbe Press, 1976); Atatürk Üniversitesi yirminci yıl armağanı, *Ermeniler hakkında makaleler derlemeler* [Articles and Selections on the Armenians] (Ankara: Kalite Press, 1978); Jamanak, *Facts from the Turkish Armenians (Réalités exprimées par les arméniens turcs/Türk Ermenilerinden gerçekler)* (Istanbul: Jamanak Press, 1980); Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi rektörlüğü, *Türk tarihinde Ermeniler sempozyumu* [Symposium on the Armenians in Turkish History] (Manisa: Şafak Press, 1983); Nejat Göyünc, *Osmanlı idaresinde Ermeniler* [Armenians under Ottoman Administration] (Istanbul: Gültepe Press, 1983); Nurettin Gülmez, *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi zabıtlarından doğu ve güneydoğu meselesi* [Eastern and South-eastern Question from the Proceedings of the Turkish Grand National Assembly] (Istanbul: Hamle Press, 1983); Kamuran Gürün, *Ermeni dosyası* [The Armenian File] (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 1983); Şinasi Orel and Süreyya Yuca, *Ermenilerce Talat Paşa'ya atfedilen telgrafların gerçek yüzü* [The Truth about the Telegrams Attributed to Talaat Pasha by the Armenians] (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 1983); Cevdet Küçük, *Osmanlı diplomasisinde Ermeni meselesinin ortaya çıkışı (1878-1897)* [The Emergence of the Armenian Question in Ottoman Diplomacy (1878-1897)] (Istanbul: Istanbul University Press, 1984); Anadolu Basın Birliği, *Katliam efsanesi* [The Myth of Massacre] (Ankara: Anatolian Press, 1987); Kinyas Kartal, *Van'dan Erivan'a hatıralarım* [My Memoirs from Van to Erevan] (Ankara: Anatolian Press, 1987); and the following by Bilal Şimşir, all published in Ankara in 1983 by the Turkish Historical Society: *The Deportees of Malta and the Armenian Question; British Documents on the Ottoman Armenians (1856-1880); The Genesis of the Armenian Question; and British Documents on the Ottoman Armenians (1880-1890)*.
16. See Bilal Eryılmaz, *Osmanlı devletinde gayrimüslim te'anın yönetimi* [The Administration of the Non-Muslim Subjects in the Ottoman State] (Istanbul: Risale Press, 1990); Azmi Süslü, *Ermeniler ve 1915 tehvir olayı* [Armenians and the 1915 Population Transfer Incident] (Ankara: Sistem Press, 1990); Salahi Sonyel, *The Great War and the Tragedy of Anatolia* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2000), and *Minorities and the Destruction of the Ottoman Empire* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 1983); Türkkaya Ataöv, *The Armenians in the Late Ottoman Period* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2001), and *The "Armenian Question": Conflict, Trauma and Objectivity* (Ankara: Strategic Research Center, 1997).
17. See Hüseyin Çelik, *Görenlerin gözüyle Van'da Ermeni mezalimi* [Armenian Atrocities in Van through Eyewitness Accounts] (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 1995); Gürsoy Solmaz, *Yasayanların dilinden Erzurum-Sarikamış-Kars ta Ermeni zulmü* [Armenian Cruelties in Erzurum, Sarikamish, and Kars from Accounts of Those Who Lived Through Them] (Van: New Hundredth Year University Press, 1995).
18. See Mim Kemal Öke, *Ermeni sorunu 1914-1923* [The Armenian Question, 1914-1923] (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 1991).
19. See Süleyman Yeşilyurt, *Atatürk, İnönü, Menderes, Gürsel dönemlerinin Ermeni Yahudi, Rum asıllı milletvekilleri* [Parliamentary Deputies of Armenian, Jewish, and Greek Origin during the Atatürk, İnönü, Menderes, Gürsel Eras] (Ankara: Zine Press, 1995).
20. Hasan Celal Güzel, *Osmanlıdan günümüze Ermeni sorunu* [The Armenian Question from the Ottomans to Our Time] (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Press, 2000).
21. These articles, by Nuri Adıyeke, "İslahat fermanı öncesinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda millet sistemi ve gayrimüslimlerin yaşantılarına dair" [Concerning the Millet System and the Lives of Non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire before

- the Reform Edict of 1856], pp. 183-92, and by Musa Şaşmaz, "Ermeniler hakkındaki reformların uygulanması (1895-1987)" [The Application of the Reforms Concerning the Armenians (1895-1897)], pp. 93-104, demonstrate how unsuccessful the Ottoman state was in carrying out the promised reforms in the eastern provinces.
22. Erol Göka, "'Ermeni sorunu'nun' (gözden kaçan) psikolojik boyutu" [The "Overlooked" Psychological Dimension of the "Armenian Question"], *Ermeni Araştırmaları/Armenian Studies* 1:1 (2001): 128-36.
 23. Refer to note 14 for a full citation of these works.
 24. For a full discussion, see Erik Jan Zürcher, *Millî mücadelede İttihatçılık* [The Unionist Factor: The Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement, 1905-1926] (Istanbul: Bağlam Press, 1987).
 25. See Taner Akçam, *İnsan hakları ve Ermeni sorunu* [Human Rights and the Armenian Question] (Istanbul: İmge Press, 1999), and Taner Timur, *Türkler ve Ermeniler: 1915 ve sonrası* [Turks and Armenians: 1915 and Its Aftermath] (Ankara: İmge Press, 2001).
 26. See Hüdavendigar Onur, *Ermeni portreleri: millet-i [sic] sadıkadan hayk'ın çocuklarına* [Armenian Portraits: From the Loyal Community to the Children of Hayk] (Istanbul: Burak Press, 1999).
 27. M. Şükrü Haniöğlü, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), and *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).
 28. Türk Tarih Vakfı, *75 yılda tebaa'dan yurttaş'a doğru* [From Subject to Citizen in 75 Years] (Istanbul: History Foundation, 1999).
 29. Osman Selim Kocahanoğlu, *İttihat-Terakki'nin sorgulanması ve yargılanması: meclis-i mebusan zabıtları* [The Interrogation and Trial of the Union and Progress: Proceedings of the Ottoman Assembly] (Istanbul: Temel Press, 1998).
 30. Fuat Dünder, *İttihat ve Terakki'nin Müslümanları iskan politikası (1913-1918)* [The Muslim Settlement Policy of the Union and Progress Party] (Istanbul: İletişim Press, 2001).
 31. Pars Tuğlacı, *Ermeni edebiyatından seçkiler* [Selections from Armenian Literature] (Istanbul: Cem Press, 1982).
 32. See, for instance, the works cited in notes 2 through 5 above: Hagop Mintzuri, *Atina, tuzun var mı?); Antan Özer, Yaşamı beklerken; Yervant Sırmakeşliyan, Balıkçı sevdası; Krikor Zohrab, Hayat, olduğu gibi.*
 33. İsmail Arıkan, *Mahallemizdeki Ermeniler* [Armenians in Our Neighborhood] (Istanbul: İletişim Press, 2001).