

# TURKEY BEYOND NATIONALISM

Towards Post-Nationalist Identities

Edited by Hans-Lukas Kieser

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## Introduction

# Beyond nationalism or beyond Kemalism? Turkey as seen from 2006 and 2012

*Hans-Lukas Kieser and Kerem Öktem*

Turkey has been shaped, above all, in the spirit of nationalism of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and, after 1923, by the modernizing elites of the Republic of Turkey. When the editor of this volume first embarked on the task of framing the debate and proposing his analytical perspective, he saw change in the hegemonic power of this nationalist spirit. A move "beyond nationalism" seemed imminent in the hopeful years of the mid-2000s, when this volume first appeared, and Turkish membership in the European Union, though hotly debated, inspired new perspectives. It was an opportune moment to look back and reflect on a century marked by violence, nationalism and top-down modernization, while at the same time beginning to anticipate the possibilities of a more pluralistic, liberal and democratic Turkey. Writing the revised introduction to the volume in 2012, we may have to concede that nationalism remains ever-present in Turkey, albeit in different shapes. Yet, first things first: What exactly was the enduring nationalist fabric of Turkey in the 20<sup>th</sup> century? How did the Turkish Republic emerge from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire; how did it develop from its initial moments in the 1920s through the Cold War years? How was it forcibly reformatted with the military coup in 1980, and then again after 2002 with the AKP (Justice and Development Party) government? Which form of secularism evolved from its founding moments? And how secular was it really at any point in this long century of Turkish nationalism? These are the core questions we are seeking to address in this revised introduction and in the contributions to this volume, which sparked a great deal of debate when it was first published.

## The long 20<sup>th</sup> century and the rise of modern Turkey

Let us take "revolution" as a key term for a short journey through Turkey's long 20<sup>th</sup> century. Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, revolution had been a rallying cry for Ottoman modernizers wishing to create a "new Turkey", but the word meant very different things to different people. Whereas the Young Turks at the turn of the century

opposed Sultan Abdülhamit and thought of their revolution as a quick way to take over political power, a broader movement of Turkish ethno-nationalists (Turkists) arose among the educated Turkish-speaking Muslim elites of the empire after 1911. They began to think of revolution as systematic social change, enforced from above and delivered by a nationalist state led by elites. They developed and propagated their modern ethno-nationalist thinking in an organization called the Turkish Hearth, an influential journal called *Turkish Homeland* (*Türk Yurdu*), and through other cultural and political networks. Ten years later, those Turkists were among the founders of the Republic. For them, nationalism, understood as an ethno-secular credo, was the ultimate and exalted response to the existential problems of the moribund Ottoman Empire. Unlike the would-be revolutionaries before them, they were ready to accept that the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire was beyond salvation. Not unlike the nationalist revolutionaries and nation-builders of the Balkans, they wished for an awakening, or resurrection, as they put it, of the “pure, innocent and healthy” Turkish nation.<sup>1</sup>

Revolutionary politics and nationalism have been closely linked in Turkish history since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. On the eve of the First World War, Turkish nationalism, together with a strong belief in science and technology, took the place of religion and the cosmopolitan Islamic tradition among educated youth. The radical nature of Turkish nationalism lies in the fact that it was a potential force for future national cohesion (though carrying in itself the seeds of fragmentation) while seeking to replace a universalist Ottoman worldview rooted in imperial traditions (if modified by earlier modernization efforts) and its explicit high Islamic tradition. Even more importantly, it attempted to displace an entire culture, which had been shaped by the omnipresence of Islamic traditions, arts, references and language. The Young Turks’ Committee of Union and Progress (the CUP, or Committee, in short), which ruled the Empire partly behind the scenes before and during the First World War, supported the Turkist movement. Yet, eager to maintain and even to expand what was at that time a vanishing empire, they followed a complex and at times contradictory set of Turkist, Islamist and Ottomanist policies. A main reason for the CUP government to enter into the First World War and to destroy the Armenian community was to avert a Europe-inspired pluralist reform of the mainly Armenian and Kurdish Ottoman eastern provinces. Aspiring to establish complete hegemony, the CUP shared the Turkists’ political, economic and social vision of a Turkish homeland (*Türk Yurdu*) in Asia Minor.<sup>2</sup>

Just before and during the First World War, the cadres of the Committee unleashed a series of enforced population movements and genocidal episodes that turned a multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic Asia Minor into a mostly Muslim and predominantly Turkish-populated territory. It would be fair to say that this “ethnic cleansing” was concluded after the First World War during the “National War of Independence”. This time, however, the national movement under Mustafa Kemal Pasha, the later Atatürk, clearly limited its territorial aspirations. The decision to accept the reality of a smaller nation-state corresponded to the military capabilities at Kemal’s disposal, which had been decimated after decades of gruelling warfare

and the Ottoman defeat in the First World War. It also happened to be in perfect accordance with the Turkist vision of a Turkish homeland in Anatolia outlined at the Geneva Congress six years earlier.

In summary, we see three stages of national revolution in the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. First, there was the takeover by young patriot Muslim Ottomans, officials and officers in the so-called Young Turk Revolution in 1908. Second, after 1911, a project emerged of a total social transformation in ethno-nationalist terms, linked to the vision of Anatolia as the homeland of the Turks. Paradoxical as it may seem, this vision coexisted then with the irredentist pan-Turkist dream of a union with the Turkic people of the Caucasus and Central Asia – a fantasy that motivated Enver Pasha’s fatal military campaign against Russia in 1914/15 and resonated with the strong pan-Turkist war propaganda since August 1914. The third stage was the battle for, and construction of, the Turkish nation-state in the interwar period, called by Kemalists the “Turkish Revolution” and presented and taught under this epithet throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The history of this revolution, the War of Independence included, has formed the sacred core of Turkey’s foundational narrative of the nation’s history.

The Kemalist revolution, and hence the early republic, is marked by a conspicuous personal and ideological continuity with the previous revolutionary movements and their protagonists – all of them eager “to save the state” and Turkish-Muslim hegemony in it. And this is not surprising. After all, and unlike the emerging nation-states of the Balkans, the state apparatus predated the establishment of the Republic. Many of the continued conflicts over the historiography of the state’s founding period, specifically from 1913 to 1938, are owed to this continuity between late empire and republic. This continuity also explains why the founders of the Republic at no point sought to disassociate themselves from the deeply anti-Christian bias of the Committee of Union and Progress and its policies in Anatolia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, even though they could have convincingly claimed to have created a new state in 1923, in opposition to the Sultan and to the representatives of the empire. The Turkish revolution of the interwar period, however, would not have been possible without the demographic facts created in the preceding decade. They were recognized in diplomatic terms in the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. Mustafa Kemal himself declared in March of the same year in Adana:

Armenians have no rights at all in this prosperous country. The country is yours, the country belongs to the Turks. In history this country was Turkish, therefore it is Turkish and will remain Turkish forever. The country has finally been returned to its rightful owners. The Armenians and the others have no rights at all here. These fertile regions [in Adana] are the country of the real Turks.<sup>3</sup>

In February 1923, during the First Congress of Economy in Izmir, the Ankara government emphasized its willingness to continue the CUP’s national economy (*millî iktisâd*), whose aims were to centralize Anatolia’s wealth and economic power

in the hands of Muslim Turks. The dispossession of hundreds and thousands of Armenians between 1915 and 1916, described as a “gigantic plundering scheme” by the American consul of the time in Aleppo,<sup>4</sup> had served precisely this goal.

Following 1923, the Kemalist single-party regime pursued a series of far-reaching reforms imposed from above with the officially propagated goal of forging a respected nation-state on equal terms with “European civilization”. The founding fathers attempted to achieve this cultural revolution by employing the methods and ideologies of the time: social engineering, anti-liberalism, authoritarianism, elitist decision making and the cult of personality; and, above all, ethnic nation-building in Anatolia – once again according to the Turkist vision of 1913 and how it was interpreted by the CUP war government.

At first glance, the contrast between European policies of the interwar period and today’s prescriptions for the road to Europe is sharp. In the former, a new nation-state based on the idea of national sovereignty stood up proudly against an agonizing imperialist post-First World War Europe. The losers were those in Asia Minor, who were not able or willing to submerge themselves in the enthusiastic yet exclusivist construction of Turkishness. In the latter, we see a more pragmatic transition to a culture of law within a pluralist framework, tightly controlled by the EU commission and its agencies. With a closer look, however, we can discern more than one connection between these two distinct moments of reform. We do see, for instance, that external and mostly European incentives drive such policies of reform and transition. Without the European anchor, and without political elites who are serious in their ambitions to be viewed as “secular” and “European”, reformist ambitions soon falter.

The wish to be secular and the wish to be European have been at the core of Turkey’s conflicted national identity, yet the commitment to Europe has been as ambiguous and contested as it has been essential. One might well argue that the civilizational centrepiece of the Turkish revolution was the Swiss Civil Code, introduced in 1926 by the young Republic. Indeed, at that time in Europe it was deemed the most progressive law of its kind. But the very act of its introduction and the aims of its promotion were not liberal at all: Mahmut Esat Bozkurt, the Minister of Justice, believed coercion and violence were appropriate means of implementing legal progress and had little sympathy for those whom he considered unworthy of full citizenship. His biographic record displays strong anti-Christian and eventually also anti-Kurdish resentment and a deeply racist understanding of history and society. It is not surprising then that in the 1930s he became an admirer of Adolf Hitler and his policy towards Turkey.

Bozkurt’s racist views were reflected in many dimensions of the new state, if not always in its higher order legal texts. Article 88 of the 1924 Constitution defined all citizens as Turks, irrespective of their ethno-religious affiliation. Administrative practice and social reality, however, fell far short of this civic understanding. The ethno-religious core group of Turkish-speaking Sunnis was considered to constitute the “real owners of the state”, and in the 1930s a strongly ethnic and even racial understanding of Turkish identity gained prominence. For example, the Law on

Settlement of 1934 which is still in force – if not in its original form – limits the right of immigration and naturalization to people “of Turkish descent and culture”, even though these terms could often be extended to include the non-Turkish speakers of Balkan descent if they were Muslims.<sup>5</sup>

Hitler, like Mussolini, called himself Atatürk’s student.<sup>6</sup> Kemalism, however, can be distinguished from Fascism and Nazism in a number of important domains. The difference was most evident in the prudent management of foreign affairs by Mustafa Kemal and his successor İsmet İnönü. Atatürk’s appearance in public as an elegant European gentleman, and not as a uniformed leader, was highly symbolic indeed.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, there were significant differences in the shape and direction of the respective revolutionary projects. The conditions of their emergence were highly disparate, with mobilization of the disenfranchised masses against liberal states on one side, and an elite-driven “revolution from above” geared towards preservation of territory and hegemony on the other. The Kemalist revolution was not based on mass support, even though it borrowed the practice of staging mass demonstrations from the fascist states of the time. Furthermore, strongly anti-democratic, anti-liberal features were common to most European states in the 1930s. In fact, one could argue that this was the essence of the “contemporary civilization” of Europe that Mustafa Kemal and his fellows saw unfolding in front of their eyes. Unlike in Western Europe, however, and despite the transition to a multi-party system, no solid break took place with these authoritarian foundations after 1945, and no attempt took hold to critically address the traumatic historical heritage of the nation-state’s founding period of 1913–1938. Fascination with Kemalism has also long been present outside Turkey, first in interwar Germany (due to shared nationalist and revisionist sympathies), and later – partly geo-strategically motivated – in British and American Turkish studies centres that praised the strongly nationalist, anti-Russian and pro-Western nation state, a NATO member since 1952.

After the Second World War, Western Europe made a symbolic break with the previous decades, if not centuries, of war, revolution and genocide, not least thanks to an assertive United States in its heyday of the Liberal Consensus. Western Europe embarked on the construction of a common future by way of reconciliation, cooperation and the gradual reformation of the nation-state. Due to its strategic position on the margins of Europe and as a Western front state throughout the Cold War, Turkey’s national myths were to be challenged only at a much later moment in time, which is probably best marked with the initial publication of this volume and select others in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>8</sup>

Together with most authors of this volume, we believe that the early 2000s were a key moment in Turkey’s history, allowing for a relative openness in historical debate and laying the foundations of a thorough and fair critique of the Kemalist state and the traumatic episodes it unleashed. Back then, we might have thought it was time to bid good-bye to manifestations of Turkish nationalism rooted in the inter-war period, with all its authoritarian and racial trappings. We were also insisting on the importance of some of the other foundational aspirations of both Kemalism and Ottoman modernist thought that were often claimed but not realized: equality,

democracy, and a modern secular state under the rule of law. Above all, however, we were hoping to bid farewell to the hegemony of ethno-religiously defined Turkishness and its coercive underpinnings. Did it not appear, in the mid-2000s, when Turkey had just begun its long-awaited accession talks with the European Union, as if the country was finally liberating itself from the double bind of Kemalism and Cold War politics and stepping into the post-nationalist world of the united Europe it was eager to join?

It may have looked so, but it was not entirely the case. When the first edition of this book came out in 2006, Turkey had already descended into yet another quagmire of deep state meddling and violence against minority groups that culminated in the murder of Hrant Dink in Istanbul and of three Protestants in Malatya in early 2007. Month after month, year after year ever since, Turkey has oscillated between the trajectory of transition, democratic reform, and steps towards strengthening the rule of law on the one side and authoritarian politics on the other. Most significantly from our vantage point, the ideal case of a reasoned and fair debate about the traumatic history of the late Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic may have become even less probable.

Nevertheless, looking back we see great strides taken in academic and public debates on the dark moments of Turkish history. Just consider the discussions on the Armenian genocide, the Dersim massacres, the Wealth Tax, the 6/7 September 1955 Pogroms and the Military Junta of 1980, which would have been impossible even to imagine in earlier decades. Yet, since the “nationalist backlash” orchestrated by deep state elements since 2005 and the establishment of a hegemonic regime under the Justice and Development Party in the late 2000s, these debates have become largely marginalized, if not suppressed altogether. The new historical gaze, which has become dominant and mainstream in the meantime, is interested in the high times of the Ottoman empire and in history as a welcome prism through which to forge a new Turkish, post-Kemalist and Islamic identity – a kind of neo-nationalism that critically puts into question Kemalism, but not the formative late nationalist project of Talat Pasha and his likes, the founding father of a homeland for the empire’s Turkish Muslims in the 1910s.

The Kemalist narrative of history and the political imprint of the republic’s founding fathers had remained an untouchable cornerstone throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Literally all political actors claimed the “biblical corpus” of Turkish nationalism – all parliamentary parties since the establishment of the multi-party system in 1946 as well as the young revolutionist Deniz Gezmiş (the figurehead of the young leftists after 1968), the authorities who hanged him in 1972, the generals of the 1980 coup, and the speakers of minorities from the Alevis to the Jews – with the exception of the Islamist movement, which still refrained from taking overly offensive positions in public. At least rhetorically, they all subscribed to the idea of the War of Independence as the founding moment of modern Turkey, to the ideals of the Turkish revolution, and to Mustafa Kemal as the immortal leader and world history’s great revolutionary. Many of them even defended the highly dubious racist history of civilizations, the so-called Turkish History thesis which

was advanced by Afet Inan, a student of anthropology and racial historian Eugène Pittard, on Kemal’s request. This is not so anymore. With the exception of the War of Independence, which is transfigured into a religiously symbolical last stand against a looming Christian onslaught, the ruling elites and the leading institutions of the state have abandoned much of the content of the Kemalist view of the world, if not its authoritarian underpinnings.

### The crisis of Kemalism

One would be inclined to ask how, in such a brief period, a mere six years since this volume was first published, has the Kemalist project of nation-building and identity-construction lost so much traction? How is it that the secularist, ethno-religious definition of Turkishness is now being so rapidly infused with Islam as the core marker of identity? The answer must be sought in the major crisis of Kemalism, triggered by the military coup of September 1980. Despite its evident contradiction with Kemalist notions of national identity, the generals introduced the Turkish-Islamic synthesis, which was disseminated through schools and state agencies, obligatory religious education classes based on the interpretations and practice of Sunni Islam, and an ever-growing state engagement in the promotion of Islam – above all through the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet). By the early 2000s, when the Justice and Development Party swept into power, at least the secular dimension of Kemalism had already been significantly eroded. However, the crisis of Kemalism and its failure to act as an integrative force in society have much deeper historical roots.

As we have already seen, the early Republic’s historical record in the founding period was anti-liberal and exclusive. From the 1950s onwards, when US-aided modernization in agriculture led to massive rural to urban migration and helped to expand schooling into most rural areas, young people from the provinces came to realize the extent of their economic, political and cultural marginalization. A rapid process of politicization and radicalization followed in the 1960s, parallel to the accelerating mass migration to the cities and particularly to Istanbul. In the relatively more permissive political environment of those years, the empty phrases with which Turkishness was celebrated everyday in the public sphere began to provoke members of non-Turkish communities, especially the Kurds. The state’s tacitly privileged treatment of Sunni Muslims meant discrimination against all other religious communities, and particularly against the Alevis. The social cleavage between those who suffered under the country’s permanent economic crises and those who exploited those crises for their profit contradicted even the most foundational republican values. The army, even though it was still seen as the guardian of the Kemalist revolution and highly respected for that, increasingly appeared as an anti-democratic institution that derived its privileged position from the country’s geostrategic importance as front state within NATO.

If the 1950s and 1960s were decades of political unrest and radicalization, it was the 1970s that brought Turkey to the brink of civil war. The war was cut off by a military coup on 12 September 1980, which created some stability – at very high human

and social costs. Whatever democratic institutions and civil politics had survived the 1970s were destroyed by the generals who sought to reshape Turkey in the contradictory fashion of the Turkish Islamic Synthesis. This project was as ethno-nationalist as the early Kemalist Republic, yet without its insistence on secularism. More importantly, it was characterized by a clear preference for a paternalistic and a state-centric reading of Islam. The very word “Kurd” remained taboo in the media and the public sphere until the anti-Kurdish massacres in Northern Iraq and subsequent mass flight into Turkey in 1988 made their existence impossible to deny. Such a brief opening in the media, however, had a negligible impact on the war between the Turkish state and the PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan, Kurdistan Workers’ Party), a Marxist-Stalinist Kurdish guerrilla force. The war of the 1980s and 1990s resulted in the deaths of close to 40,000 citizens of Turkey, many of them non-combatants.

Turkey was again haunted by the suppressed reforms in its eastern provinces; this was the ultimately utopian and unrealized project to implement rule of law in the multi-ethnic areas of the late Ottoman Empire, which Turkish nationalists had declared to be part of the Turkish homeland, the *Türk Yurdu*. Turkish nationalism, including its original phobias inherited from the Balkan Wars, the Armenian genocide and the First World War, was greatly reinvigorated in the context of the Kurdish War and the uncertainties emanating from the end of the Cold War. The first casualties were non-militant Kurdish intellectuals, the very people who could have mediated between the PKK and the state. They stood accused of conspiring to destroy Turkey’s territorial unity and working on behalf of the Europeans and Americans. In the mid-1990s, Turkey was once again nearing a zenith of violence: government after government composed of weak coalitions of unseemly bedfellows reacted with coercive policies and violent interventions. Who would propose innovative concepts fed by deeper historical insight? In the Kurdish War, security forces, often in collaboration with Mafia-like networks and radical Islamists such as the Kurdish *Hizbullah*, systematically depopulated thousands of villages and unleashed a massive migratory wave from Kurdistan to the cities of Western Turkey and beyond. As an ironic aside, this policy of destruction created an ethnically more diverse society in Western Turkey, where major cities now host substantial Kurdish populations.

The war with the PKK, and the massive human loss it entailed, had seriously destabilized the country by the end of the 1990s. The clientelist and corrupt coalition governments of the decade were showing signs of irremediable wear. An era seemed to be coming to an end, and if anyone had second doubts, a series of natural and man-made disasters came to mark the demise of the violent last decade of the century. The 1999 Marmara earthquake did for Turkey what the Great Lisbon Earthquake did for Voltaire and the Enlightenment, revoking the idea that one was living in the “best of all possible worlds”. Amidst the deaths of tens of thousands, lost to an unholy mix of bad governance and greed, the Turkish state as the ultimate target of respect and worship floundered, and the ideological frame collapsed. All the fears of the outside world, the imagination of the globe as a place dominated by enemies which had gained so much credence after the coup of 1980

and the Kurdish War, were debunked by the outpouring of genuine sympathy and care from neighbours. The earthquake even created the incentive for a “seismic rapprochement” between Turkey and Greece, which was shaken by tremors only a week after. The economic crisis, which struck two years later, was the final blow that brought down the established regime of the two post-coup decades. The crisis of 2001 might have also marked the turning point when secular Turkish nationalism lost its hegemonic claim as the “syntax” of the political system, as Ebru Bulut avers in this volume.

After all these blows and setbacks, the final crisis of Kemalism was resolved not within a secular, nationalist context but in a new and arguably more pragmatic political tradition which had been suppressed at times but supported by the United States and many actors within Turkey since the 1980s – the Islamists, represented by the Justice and Development Party and led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. In their short- and medium-term impact, the elections of 2002 came as close to a revolution as elections can. The entire political establishment of the preceding decades was swept out of parliament, save for the Republican People’s Party (CHP), which even ten years later is still struggling to find a convincing political position between its authoritarian past and its potential to become a modern social democrat party.

### Looking back from 2012

Looking back from 2012, it is clear that the foundations of the Kemalist state had already been severely undermined by 2002. The following decade, touched upon briefly above, resembled an accelerated roller coaster: a comparatively liberal-minded AKP preparing for EU accession talks; a more pragmatic attitude towards the chronic problems of Turkey’s contested identity; a much more open “feel” in the public debate, and the official confirmation of Turkey’s European bid with the start of accession talks with the European Union in 2005. In hindsight, those events marked the promising pinnacle of what Maureen Freely once called the “Turkish Spring”. Equally accurately, those years could be seen as an opportunistic space of freedom between two hegemonic conditions, when Kemalist hegemony was not yet completely shattered and AKP hegemony not yet fully established. The “spring” was followed by a neo-nationalist backlash, political manipulations and deep state interventions; a growing dissent amongst European elites concerning Turkish membership; a breath-taking power struggle between Kemalists and Islamists, fought out at the helm of state institutions from the high judiciary to the military and the Presidency; a flare up of ethnic violence in Kurdistan; massive waves of court cases against Kurdish nationalists and their sympathizers; and finally, with the general elections of 2011, close to complete hegemony of the AKP and their allies.

On the surface, it is even harder today to speak of “Turkey beyond Nationalism” than it was in 2006 – “beyond Kemalism” would be more accurate. What has changed is not the centrality of nationalism in the definition of Turkish identity, in the exercise of citizenship and in debates on the future of Turkey, but its fundamental content. Whereas Islam had been pushed to the margins of public life

in the Kemalist tradition – even though it retained its significance as ultimate marker of Turkishness – the Justice and Development Party government has propagated a notion of Turkishness that celebrates what it believes to be its deeply religious roots and the splendor of the Ottoman Empire. The new project is more flexible in ethnic terms and slightly more sympathetic towards language and cultural rights. However, being hegemonic, it remains exclusive. The difference lies in which groups are excluded. Religious Kurds and the conservative core of Turkish society have become fully empowered in this project along with some Christian minorities which are now better off than they have been at any point in the history of the Republic. In numeric terms, the majority is now deemed as being in power. Yet, Alevis, secular Turks, women, lesbians, gays and transsexuals are the new second-class citizens as a result of a wide range of discriminatory practices.

Within the new hegemonic block, the role of the powerful transnational Hizmet movement of Fethullah Gülen, close to the AKP government in the early 2000s, and its take on liberal values and ethics beyond nationalism, remains volatile. As the new block reimagines Turkey and its history and attempts to shape identities and lifestyles, the “historiographical challenge”, posited in the introduction of this book’s first edition, has been taken up by a growing number of scholars in Turkey and abroad. Despite the current roller coaster loop veering towards a narrowing of liberties, Turkey’s traumatic history is now being explored and evaluated from many different angles. The best examples of such works succeed in moving beyond exposing the “dark side of nationalism” to creating bridges that connect communities and bodies of knowledge previously obscured by Kemalist Historiography. The exploration of the common history of Turks and Armenians, for instance, has unearthed the role of Turks not only in the destruction of the Armenian community but also in its defense. Many scholars have responded to the call that Raymond Kévorkian made in 2006. The interactions between Kurds and Turks over the centuries and the history of the autonomous Kurdish emirates are at the centre of the emerging body of Kurdish scholarship. And finally, the transnational nature of identities in the late Ottoman Empire and the Republic is now being discussed not only in Turkey but in the entire region.

In the last couple of years, Turkey has been described as a new actor of global politics. The state seems more self-confident than it has since the 1950s, and in terms of economic progress Turkey has much reason for its aplomb. Turkish cultural and political influence is felt throughout a wide geography that partly overlaps the Ottoman sphere of influence, yet extends beyond it.<sup>9</sup> The foundations of this sudden rise – which was not even imaginable at the time of writing the first edition in 2006 – are partially erected on quicksand. Such structural flaws are most apparent in the regime’s usage of history. Much like their Kemalist predecessors, the ideologues of Islamic and conservative Turkey prefer hagiography to critical history. Their imagined Ottoman Empire is but a mythical picture of one of the most complex, multi-religious and multi-lingual powers of the modern world. The same misrepresentation obstructs a critical inquiry of the anti-Christian Young Turk regime of Talat Pasha and the Pan-Islamist policies of Sultan Abdülhamit.

Thus, the challenge remains for historians and scholars of the social world to continue their critical engagement with modern Turkey, and to explore its significance for a whole set of larger European debates on nationalism, secularism and the meaning of European identity. We hope that *Turkey Beyond Nationalism* will continue to offer insightful points of departure for this endeavour.

### Structure and chapters

This volume has five parts that cover about a hundred years from the founding period of Turkish nationalism, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to today’s post-nationalist challenges in relation to EU reforms, historiography and collective self-understanding.

The contributions in Part I address the foundational period of Turkish nationalism and its enduring ideological weight. Mehmed Ş. Hanioglu articulates the ground-breaking thesis that several years before the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 and the Turkist Movement of the 1910s, Turkism was already the driving force of the members of the Central Committee of the Young Turks’ revolutionary Committee of Union and Progress. His text is a comprehensive historical introduction to the origins of Turkish nationalism.

In his biographical approach to Mahmut Esat Bozkurt, Hans-Lukas Kieser focuses on Turkist continuities from the late Ottoman to early Republican times. He emphasises the ideological force Turkism possessed for the generation born during the Ottoman *fin de siècle*, and its force of “salvation”, after Islamic Imperial thought had entered a state of deep crisis in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He points out the profound ambivalence of the modernist project related to Turkism, including Kemalism, since it oscillated between an Occidentalism regarded as universal, and an exalted, pseudo-scientific *völkisch* enthusiasm that excluded the ethno-religious Other, if he or she did not or could not convert to the “Turkish ideal”.

In his chapter, Hamit Bozarslan distinguishes between three stages of Kemalism: first, the Kemalist movement during the War of Independence as a kind of offspring of the Committee of Union and Progress that cleansed “its” Anatolian territory from its Christian “enemies”; second, the revolutionary process of the 1920s (after 1923), focused on the personality of Mustafa Kemal, but without a codified ideology; and third, in the 1930s, Kemalism as an elaborated ideology of nationalist revolution, giving the state the right to exert absolute control over society. Kemalism represented “a thoroughly successful experience of integration into Europe, but into a profoundly anti-democratic and anti-liberal Europe”, Bozarslan writes. He concludes by asking whether “Turkey will be able to bid farewell to yesterday’s Europe, as the condition of her integration into Europe, or if she will preserve the Kemalist legacy as the essence of her own conception of Europe.”

Part II focuses on what happened to those ethno-religious groups that did not fit into the identity schemes of Turkish nationalism. The Armenian Genocide and the coercive Greek-Turkish population exchange are well-known events in Europe, but they are also exemplars of recurrent episodes of massive ethno-religious



violence, coercion and discrimination during and beyond the Republic's founding period. Based on official Ottoman documents, Fuat Dündar summarizes the CUP's extensive settlement policies during the First World War that also concerned non-Turkish Muslim groups such as the Kurds.

With regard to the Jewish communities of the early republic, Rifat Bali explores the politics of Turkification during the single party period from 1923 to 1950. Turkification policies targeted non-Turkish Muslims, while the Republic remained ambivalent where non-Muslims were concerned. Massacres and expulsion before 1923 had minimized their numbers, yet their relative insignificance, and hence the lower risk perception among Republican decision makers, did not pave the way to equal citizenship. Despite administrative pressures and various measures of Turkification, the Turkification of non-Muslims in the sense of integration into an egalitarian and secular Turkish nation failed.

Slightly different was the case of the *dönme*, Jews, mostly from Saloniki, who had converted to Sunni Islam in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. *Dönme* were far better placed than Christians or Jews in their quest to assimilate into Turkish society and gain access to positions of power. However, this identity was "difficult to resolve so long as the question of race surfaced and conceptions of race fed into understandings of the nation", as Marc Baer reminds us. Thus the discriminatory implementation of the 1942 Wealth Tax touched not only Christians and Jews, but also *dönme* citizens. Contrary to official depictions of Turkey as a protector and "safe haven for the Jews", and complementary to some laudable but small-scale initiatives by Turkish diplomats of the time, Corinna Görgü shows that the Turkish Republic deprived several thousand of its Jewish nationals living abroad of their citizenship between 1938 and 1945. Many of them faced the risk – and often also the reality – of persecution and annihilation. In her chapter, Berna Pekesen explores the Armenian exodus from Alexandretta in the 1930s. Armenian survivors of 1915 again lost their provisional homes when, at the eve of the Second World War, France and the Society of Nations attributed this Arabic part of Syria to the Republic of Turkey. Realistically, they did not expect a viable future in this state.

Despite the profound ambivalence of Turkish nationalist actors towards non-Sunni Muslim communities and non-Turkish communities, nationalism was and remains the most powerful legitimizing framework within which to formulate claims for rights, particularly for members of the Alevi community. They have often proclaimed themselves to be ardent supporters of Kemalism in order to protect themselves against allegations of being illegitimate "Others" with particularist claims, a phenomenon Elise Massicard elucidates in her chapter.

Part III addresses the post-nationalist historiographical challenge facing Turkey today: how to come to terms with a complex past while moving beyond nationalist mantras that repress the traumatic episodes on which they are built. As Fatma Müge Göçek reminds us, the Turkish historical narrative could not possibly have problematized the ideology of nationalism, because it was one of its foundational exercises in the first place. She proposes an alternative, post-nationalist periodization of Ottoman and Turkish history, wherein the nationalist period starts with the

1902 Congress of the Ottoman opposition parties in Paris and not, as the Turkish master-narrative would make us believe, with the War of Independence and Mustafa Kemal in 1919. Concentrating on the turning point of 1902 allows us to reimagine both the multicultural Ottoman order and the decisive Turkist turn taken by the Committee of Union and Progress' Central Committee. Thus, a post-nationalist Turkish historiography needs to reconsider the analysis of the two decades before 1923, taking a critical stance towards deeply rooted nationalist prejudices regarding these "most virulent formative stages of Turkish nationalism".

The most formative of those virulent stages was the murder of the Armenians of Anatolia during the First World War, a *pièce de résistance* and insuperable obstacle for a narrow – secular or religious – nationalist historiography, as the perspective of the victims cannot be contained within it. Insofar as historiography is an activity dealing with truth(s), or at least with realities, scholarly responsibility is of the essence. Beyond legal issues, Raymond Kévorkian addresses the question of how to address the historical responsibility for the Armenian Genocide. Analysing a series of court-martials in Istanbul in 1919–20, he suggests that the tried Sunni Muslim officers and administrators considered themselves the empire's hegemonic rulers, the *millet-i hakime*, and therefore felt no ultimate responsibility towards any other communities. Instead of official efforts to exonerate and even justify the acts of key instigators of mass violence like Talat Pasha or Enver Pasha, Kévorkian proposes to the actors of a future Turkish national historiography to explore the role of Turkish people with civic courage who acted against the anti-Armenian measures of the Committee, like Vehib Pasha, Hasan Mazhar and many other soldiers or civil servants.

"Turkey in motion" is the topic of Parts IV and V. The latter deals with Turkey and the EU, and in particular with the impact of EU reforms on Turkey in the early 2000s. Eugen Krieger traces the story of Turkey's first steps toward the European Economic Community (EEC) in the 1960s. In 1963, EEC president Joseph Luns had optimistically declared that the Treaty of Association with Ankara testified "to the profound changes taking place on our continent". Krieger points out that major motivations for the Treaty of Association with Ankara were security concerns in the context of the Cold War and USA pressure. The enormous financial aid repeatedly given by the EEC and the United States did not promote democratic transition. Instead, the assistance only aided in sustaining the precarious policies of political and military elites, which held few answers to social unrest, economic crisis, mass migration and military coups. Ebru Bulut shows in her chapter how this "traditional" political system was able to reproduce itself again in the 1990s, and how it was supported by a revival of popular nationalism against the background of the war in the Kurdish provinces. Nationalist cohesion collapsed after 1999, with the economic crisis of 2001 playing an important role and thus opening the way for the reconfiguration of the political landscape in 2002.

The EU's decision in 1999 to accept Turkey as a candidate for full membership was an important factor in this reconfiguration. Gabriel Goltz examines the intensive reform process that Turkey underwent in the first years of the new millennium with regard to non-Muslim minorities. A loosening of the state's tight grip over the

society, as a result of the EU process, he suggests, has created important, if modest, changes for Christian and Jewish groups, which had been severely discriminated against in much of the Republican era – despite the minority rights set out in the Lausanne Treaty. Analysing the interconnections between national identity, asylum and immigration politics, Kemal Kirişçi portrays the EU as a vehicle of post-nationalist transformation in Turkey. In recent asylum and immigration policies there are, he suggests, clear elements of “post-nationalization” compared with the previous ones rooted in the Kemalist interwar period. In these two areas, “Turkish officials are now much more willing to cooperate with Turkish and foreign non-governmental organizations, western governments, the European Commission and other international organizations, such as the UNHCR in particular.”

Part IV explores the politics and symbols of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), and of its first legislative period in power, which began in 2002 and extended to 2007. In her chapter on “post-nationalist semiotics”, Béatrice Hendrich interprets the AKP’s emblem, a shining bulb underneath the acronym “Ak Parti” (“ak” meaning white, clean). For her, the emblem “strives to integrate in one message Islamic tradition, societal reform, technical and cultural progress and the orientation towards a democratic Europe, instead of making Turkish nation-building its only goal.” Günter Seufert reviews the AKP’s religious politics, questioning whether the AKP government still uses religion as a means of nation-building, as the “secularist” Republic of Turkey always did through the Directorate of Religious Affairs (founded in 1924, when the Caliphate was abolished). Or are there signs of religion becoming a force of civil society instead? The fundamental problem, as Seufert states with reference to the theologian Mehmed S. Aydın, is that “the omnipresence of debates about religion goes hand in hand with the absence of religion as a moral language of society”, and hence religion’s silence on vital issues. This reality stands in marked contrast to churches’ voices in Europe and the United States. Seufert believes that a new, more liberal way of approaching religion – postulated by personalities like Hüseyin Hatemi from Istanbul University’s Law Faculty, or particularly in the form of a “new Islamic theology”, by Mehmed S. Aydın (fomer Minister of State in charge of the Directorate of Religious Affairs) – “is (...) preparing state and society for reforms that may become inevitable in the years to come”.

Part IV closes with a chapter by Gülistan Gürbey on the Kurdish conflict, the real test case for Turkey’s political future. Despite important first steps in promoting cultural rights during this period, the challenge of internally displaced persons, mostly refugees from the Kurdish provinces in Western Turkey, was still unresolved, and remains so today. This part of Asia Minor has had a particularly traumatic history since the late Ottoman era. It was marked by recurrent state violence, international reform postulates and military conflict. A peaceful resolution to the Kurdish conflict is a precondition for Turkey’s internal peace, and depends on European standards and historically informed reforms. This was so at the time of the writing of the introduction to the first volume in 2006, as it is now.

## PART I

# TURKISH NATIONALISM: THE IDEOLOGICAL WEIGHT OF THE FOUNDING PERIOD (1905-1938)