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### Young Turk social engineering : mass violence and the nation state in eastern Turkey, 1913-1950

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## 8. Conclusions

This study has argued that from 1913 to 1950, the Young Turk regime subjected Eastern Turkey, an ethnically heterogeneous space, to various forms of nationalist population policies aimed at ethnically homogenizing the region and including it in the Turkish nation state. The study has highlighted the role played by the Young Turks in the identification of the population of the eastern provinces as an object of knowledge, management, and radical change. It has detailed the emergence of a wide range of new technologies of population policies, including physical destruction, deportation, urban planning, forced assimilation, and memory control, which all converged to increase ethnic and cultural homogeneity within the nation state. It also provides evidence for the thesis that a clear continuity can be observed in population policies between the first Young Turk regime of 1913-18 (the Committee of Union and Progress), and the second of 1919-50 (the Republican People's Party). This section reviews the main conclusions of this study in a brief recapitulation. Rather than repeating each chapter's discussion, it will draw together the main strands and threads of the arguments and move towards a synthesis.

In the Introduction, the question was raised of how Eastern Turkey was molded by Young Turk population policies. To provide answers to this question, five forms of population policies were analyzed in the subsequent chapters: genocide, high-modernist planning, deportations, assimilation, and memory politics. In order to integrate those separate but interconnected chapters, Chapter 2 laid a general, introductory framework and explained how the ideas of nationalism and population policies gained currency among new upcoming classes of Ottoman Muslim military officers, intellectuals, bureaucrats, and experts, divided by profession but united in ethnic nationalism. The ideology of population policies was the common source from which the various policies were derived. The chapter illustrated how the spread of nationalism and population policies reached the Ottoman Empire and deeply influenced its political elite. Of paramount importance was the emergence of the Young Turk party in the late nineteenth century, a nationalist revolutionary movement that engaged in a power struggle with its liberal, religious, and monarchist competitors as well as with ethnic minority parties. In 1908 the party succeeded in overthrowing the Sultan and moving into the corridors of power. Although the movement had propagated freedom, equality, and brotherhood, like so many revolutions the Young Turk revolution too betrayed its initial

ideals and the principles of liberal rule: constitutional monarchy and individual freedom quickly perished. The movement grew in power, emerged victorious in the 1913 coup d'état, and installed a dictatorship with totalitarian ambitions that never shunned the use of violence against its opponents and parts of its own population. The Young Turks were convinced that the only way the Ottoman state could survive was as a nation state. They embraced the idea of a Turkish nation state, partly for ideological reasons, but to a large extent also for pragmatic political reasons: the nation-state formula provided an almost absolute protection from foreign interference in the name of national sovereignty. In the face of the wide vista of social heterogeneity in Ottoman society, this meant that a profound ethnic homogenization needed to be organized. In this process, the eastern provinces came to hold a special place (and for this reason are worthy of special attention in this study). The East differed in terms of geopolitical position, economic development, and ethnic composition far from the utopian ideal of the Young Turk vision. As a result, it would be subjected to a series of population policies with high levels of violence.

The first set of population policies launched were forced assimilation and expulsion, but the outbreak of World War I radicalized these policies into physical destruction. The genocide of the Armenians developed from this radicalization. But reducing the Armenian genocide to 'mere' mass murder would downplay its complexity. The genocide consisted of a set of overlapping processes that geared into each other and together produced an intended and coherent process of destruction. These processes were mass executions, deportations, forced assimilation, destruction of material culture, and the construction of an artificially created famine region. Nor would it be correct to reduce the Armenian genocide to a 'mere' destructive process. The genocide heralded the coming of a new era and stipulated the parameters of a formative Turkish nation state, or an empire with a dominant Sunni Turkish core and a marginalized periphery. The destruction of Ottoman Armenians represented the first stage in the organization of inclusion and exclusion in the eastern provinces. More precisely, inclusion in the nation was defined by exclusion. As the Armenians were deported, the residual population became a vague Turkish-Ottoman-Muslim in-group. By excluding the Armenians from a certain region the Young Turks delineated a tentative ethno-territorial conception of the new society they envisioned. In other words, they not only defined the social location of the nation but also its territorial location: the motherland was those territories where the excluded were no longer living. Turkey *was* where Armenians were *not*. This was not a precise geometric border, but a provisional ethnic space. This shaping of such a future was a very important aim and outcome of the genocide, and precluded potential

future ethno-majoritarianist claims by minorities. The many ethnically formatted demographic directives towards maximums (such as 5% and 10% of the total population) exemplify this, and were the result of the import of those ideas of population policies from other parts of Europe. It was not a total coincidence that the Turkish-Syrian border was established alongside several large villages that were more or less successfully “Turkified” during the war. This interpretation suggests that the Armenian genocide not only influenced but shaped the contours of the Turkish process of nation formation.

In the aftermath of the war and the genocide, Diyarbakir became known as a city of orphans, converts, prostitutes, and bandits. These people had one thing in common: they were for a large part products or by-products of Young Turk population policy. The destruction of the Armenians produced orphans, converts, and prostitutes on the victim side, whereas many of the bandits were those chieftains who had been armed by the CUP on the perpetrator side. The Young Turk dictatorship wanted to bring “order” into this Diyarbakir. The regime saw itself as a master gardener, bringing “structure” into the garden of society by organizing the diversity of plants and weeding out the “undesirables”. The dictatorship was supported by a significant number of intellectuals and academics, among whom many historians and social scientists who would later achieve renown, and who between 1913 and 1950 put their intelligence and abilities to working out how to “Turkify” the eastern provinces, including cities such as Diyarbakir. As the regime was deeply influenced by a high-modernist philosophy, the reorganization of space and population was viewed as a necessary passage to “modernity” and “civilization”. The “restructuring” of Diyarbakir city was an important pillar of the regime’s ideology and practice of population policies. Everything in the city that reminded the visitor of its multi-ethnic past needed to be effaced in favor of a “purely Turkish city”.

In a way, one can advance the argument that the high-modernist city and countryside policies were seen as palliatives against the unintended outcomes of prior Young Turk population policies. The necessity of building a new, “modern” city for a large part resulted from the destruction of the middle class, Christians who had been massacred in 1915. The necessity of pacifying the countryside, too, resulted from the CUP’s arming of loyal Kurdish tribes in 1914-15. In other words, the Young Turks were chasing the consequences of their own population policies but at the time they had not, could not have, or had not wanted to foresee the consequences of those policies. This may have been a Europe-wide phenomenon. After all, the modern history of Diyarbakir did not differ markedly from Salonica’s,

Wrocław's, or Lviv's in this respect.<sup>1518</sup> Total war and genocide swept away a multi-ethnic past representing an imperial order, replacing it with the order of the nation state. Whereas one or more of the victimized minorities were integrally destroyed through genocide, others were expelled to neighboring kin states or deported in other ways. In all cases, the city itself radically changed as a result of the persecutions. Cemeteries were levelled, gravestones used for road construction, old writings effaced, and victimized groups expelled from history books. To a large extent this metamorphosis was part of a totalitarian policy to craft society by reshaping the city. Social engineers and nationalist intellectuals across Europe planned the future of the Other's city, and legitimized its "restructuring" and nationalist appropriation.

Besides urban planning, deportations of Kurds away from and the settlements of Turks into the eastern provinces formed another vector of population policies, expounded in Chapter 5. Three major waves of deportations struck the Kurdish population of the East. The first generation of deportees suffered perhaps the most amidst the harsh conditions of the First World War and the seasons. The second cohort, deported right after the establishment of the Republic from 1925 to 1927, did not stay away from their native regions very long and many deportees returned within a year or two. The third deportation was organized after the consolidation of the single-party dictatorship in 1934 and was more sophisticated and categorical. Only when the Young Turks were ousted from power in 1950 were Kurds no longer deported. The deportations displayed a distinct process of evolution from the first to the last phase. Young Turk social engineers accumulated experience and as they muddled through, learnt from their prior mistakes and thus sophisticated and perfected the craft of deportation. The three phases of deportations exhibit an evolving dialectic: ethno-territorial thinking, the promulgation of a law, the implementation of the deportation, the separation of elites from populace, and the monitoring of the 'output' of the deportation back into the process to regulate the 'input', i.e. keeping track of the deportees' experiences to improve the method. The Young Turk regime, as it consolidated its power base, sharpened its tools of population policies and developed a distinct finesse in organizing them. The regime became increasingly agile in fine-tuning the various frequencies of population policies in mutual harmony, and its retrospective evaluations were veritable educational experiences.

The type of education they foresaw for the population of the eastern provinces was markedly different. Chapter 6 chronicled the case of what happens when schools are put in the

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<sup>1518</sup> Mark Mazower, *Salonica: City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews 1430-1950* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2004), pp.275-428; Norman Davies & Roger Moorhouse, *Microcosm: Portrait of a Central European City* (London: Cape, 2002); Delphine Bechtel, "Lemberg/Lwów/Lvov/Lviv: Identities of a 'City of Uncertain Boundaries'," in: *Diogenes*, no.210 (2006), pp.62-71.

service of a political ideology. It detailed the tireless diligence with which Young Turk educators infused their ideology into every aspect of the educational infrastructure, from history to geography, and from literature to gymnastics. The dictatorship's particular understanding of teaching (the cultivation of skills, trades and professions, as well as mental, moral, and aesthetic development) sought to do three things: naturalize the nation state and the place of the eastern provinces in it, craft through propaganda new generations loyal to the party, and "Turkify" the non-Turkish population culturally. To this end, the regime constructed hegemonic canons of culture and language, practising culture beyond which was prohibited and punishable. These canons were embedded in and widely disseminated through the school textbook. Education played a very important part under the Young Turk regime in trying to cultivate a loyal following for the nation, Atatürk, and the Young Turk party. The Young Turk leadership appreciated the difficulty of indoctrinating the older generation and were all the more determined to mold the new generation along Young Turk lines, reasoning that he who controls the youth, controls the future. Thus, the regime hoped that education would create new generations of loyal young men and women by the time they reached adulthood. The schools were to play a critical part in setting this process in motion. Indoctrination and the use of propaganda were to sow the seeds of nationalism in Young Turkey's education system and with the passage of time, educational material more and more came to resemble propaganda. Young Turk education was also gendered, or perhaps even sexist: the idealization of motherhood for girls and martialism for boys was a regular theme, as well as rural life. Girls and boys were taught that they had clear roles in Turkish society: boys would go on to be soldiers and fight for the nation, and it was girls' duty to become mothers and produce the next generation of soldiers. Most importantly, schools were also to achieve the "Turkification" of children from non-Turkish backgrounds, such as Kurds, Arabs, Circassians, and others, so as to assimilate them into the Turkish nation. Ministry of Education officials repeatedly asserted that education in the East would markedly differ from that in the West. These decisions taken and measures adopted and implemented by the Young Turks constituted a frontal attack on existing forms of culture and education in the eastern region. The multiple assaults on cultural identities were informed by racism and colonial attitudes but masked as a civilizing mission.

The final chapter on the politics of memory focused on how the Young Turk regime, by meting out a new identity for the country, also meted out a new memory for it. From 1913 on, the Young Turk treatment of the past ranged from the organization of oblivion regarding the traumatic past, construction of an official narrative that included heroic and eternalized

images of the nation. All throughout the country, but particularly for the eastern provinces, orders were given to write new local histories. These official textbooks, nationalist canons, and city histories not only imposed broad silences on critical historical issues, they also banished all ethnic minorities out of (regional) histories. To vindicate their claim that the eastern provinces had eternally been Turkish, the Young Turks left a formidable imprint of memory in the region. From large cities to small towns, across the geography of the eastern provinces, places bear the names of Young Turk officers, politicians, and myths. The Young Turk era left a troublesome legacy in terms of memory. Although the era itself is over, all its politicians, military officers, and intellectuals mentioned in this study having passed away, their legacy remains problematic, not least for Eastern Turkey. The main political challenges for the Turkish Republic still lie in Eastern Turkey and are symbolized by two seemingly irrelevant strips of frontier: the closed border with the Republic of Armenia, and the severely militarized strip with Iraq, or the Kurdistan Regional Government. Both of these governments represent ethnic groups excluded from the eastern territories in the Young Turk era, Armenians by destruction and Kurds by deportation and persecution. The legacy of the Young Turk era continues to bedevil the relations between these groups.

The relative autonomy of ideas is particularly relevant when studying the effects of the official memory constructed by the Young Turks. The seeds that the Young Turks planted into society had a lasting influence. Although they are no longer in power, their ideas are still very much alive. A system that had been ingrained for generations could not be easily undone by a simple regime change at the top level. The Young Turks created a moral and cultural gaze, firmly anchored in modern Turkish identity, the horizon of which is limited to the Turkish nation state. These are purposefully created spheres of language, geography, and knowledge which function as closed circuits and whose contours are meant to function as cognitive barriers. Current generations of townsmen in Diyarbekir have little or no knowledge of their Armenian compatriots living in Syria because maps present Syria as socially empty space; because it is difficult to get a visa to travel to Syria; because Armenians are enemies; and because travel to Syria is discouraged with the argument that Turkey itself offers plenty of opportunity for tourism. Diyarbekir's youth interested in their region's history have no access to pre-1928 texts in Ottoman Turkish, let alone in any other relevant languages. The libraries in Diyarbekir barely offer anything substantial and realistic that can not be subsumed under the rubric of memory politics and nationalist narrative left by Young Turk librarians. Therefore, the racial and historical theories of Chapter 7 should not be waved away as typical interwar nationalist myth-making, whose influence waned after the Young Turks lost power.

They still stand firm as hegemonic corpora of historical knowledge and narrative produced by the Young Turk regime.

The coherence in these chapters revolves around the ontology of nationalist population policies. It was the paradigm of ethnic majoritarianism that served as a framework for the political legitimacy shaping Young Turk population policies. The logic and laws of those policies followed an ethno-territorial line of thought. There was a mutual dependence between these various forms of population policy: Young Turk social engineers had divided the population of the eastern provinces into elites and populace. Deportation of the elite was one aspect of Young Turk social engineering; it would be complemented by the concurrent policy of assimilation of ordinary people. Genocide and expulsion of undesirable peoples such as Armenians and Syrians was inherent and implicit in this process of destruction and construction. This coexistence can perhaps be called “creative destruction”: it is both inclusion and construction, i.e. formative, and destruction and exclusion, i.e. annihilatory.

The systematic sorting of peoples, based on qualitative as well as quantitative criteria, was one of the cornerstones of these policies of measuring the value of human lives in terms of ethnicity. When it came to the ‘restructuring’ of the eastern provinces, racism and modernization were not conflicting processes but complementary ones. Modernization of the state’s technological and administrative infrastructure ensured that population policies could be conducted on a larger scale and more systematically than ever before. The deportees were dispatched westward on foot during the First World War, but by train in the interbellum. As ideology merged with modern scientific rationalism, a series of vague and improvised schemes developed into concrete programs. These policies accompanied bureaucratic professionalization, a key prerequisite for the organization of the population policies. Modern were its methods, such as the division of labour, the cataloguing, marginalizing, dispossessing, isolating, and compartmentalizing of victims. But no less modern were the ideologies invoked by Young Turk social engineers to justify their beliefs of fundamentally changing the social and ethnic composition of the eastern provinces. This included the ethnic segmentation and hierarchization of eastern society, the nationalist moral universe, and the tabula rasa scenario of the eastern provinces – all of which excited the imagination of territorial planners and social engineers. For the Young Turks, population policies, violent or not, were a quest for a respectable, “scientific” (thus legitimate) persecution of minorities. Herein lies the major distinction between persecution and social engineering – disorganized vs. organized violence. Persecution appeared not as a clear evil but rather as the shadow of

virtue. Just as there was no contradiction between modernization and ethnic nationalism, there was no ambiguity in the coexistence of civilization and barbarism. As civilized life continued and flourished in the pacified streets of Ankara, hermetic compartments of mass killing were constructed in the valleys and plateaus of Diyarbekir.<sup>1519</sup>

The paradox lies elsewhere, namely in the relationship between the systematization of population policies and the relatively weak output resulting from them. The policies the Young Turks launched with great fervour were less successful they had hoped them to be. How can these apparently paradoxical developments be reconciled? In other words, how effective were these forms of population policies? Armenian and Kurdish nationalists hasten to explain the dichotomy as a function of stubborn resistance by brave men and women defending their ethnicity or homeland. But more plausible possible explanations need to be sought elsewhere. However, fully measuring the effectivity of any policy is not only difficult, but is also beyond the scope of this thesis, for it would require in-depth research on the post-Young Turk era. Therefore, the following comments are meant to be indicative rather than authoritative.

First of all, severely coercive policies launched by a political elite on a society can hardly be measured statically as absolute “successes” versus “failures”. A more processual approach posits that the homogenizing processes launched by the Young Turk regime faced other processes that resisted and counterbalanced the homogenizing forces, much like kinetic friction or musical counterpoints. A concise answer to this question would be that the policies did not deliver the immediate results the organizers had hoped for, and when they did so, partially produced long-term concomitant processes either aggravating the initial problems or counterbalancing them. The destruction of the Armenians, for example, was pursued as a definitive ‘solution’ to the Armenian ‘question’, but years later reemerged as a new Armenian question still frustrating Turkish politics. The high-modernist urban planning pursued for Diyarbekir city did not fundamentally transform the city into a European one because it was simply impossible to organize such a profound metamorphosis of any city without causing immense destruction. The deportations of Kurds and settlements of Turks did not “Turkify”

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<sup>1519</sup> For discussions of this dialectic of civilization and barbarism see: Norbert Elias, *Studien über die Deutschen: Machtkämpfe und Habitusentwicklung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989), pp.391-516; Bernard Wasserstein, *Barbarism and Civilization: A History of Europe in Our Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.793; Ton Zwaan, “‘Modernity’ and ‘Barbarity’ in Genocidal Processes” (unpublished manuscript, 2007); Robert van Krieken, “The Barbarism of Civilization: Cultural Genocide and the ‘Stolen Generations’,” in: *British Journal of Sociology*, vol.50, no.2 (1999), pp.297-316; Abram de Swaan, “Dyscivilization, Mass Extermination and the State,” in: *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol.18, no.2-3 (2001), pp.265-76; Peter Imbusch, *Moderne und Gewalt: zivilisationstheoretische Perspektiven auf das 20. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2005); Frank Bajohr (ed.), *Zivilisation und Barbarei: die widersprüchlichen Potentiale der Moderne: Detlev Peukert zum Gedenken* (Hamburg: Christians, 1991).

the Diyarbekir region, since many Kurds moved back and many Turks moved away when the regime was voted out of office. The effectivity of the policies of cultural and educational “Turkification” hardly affected the population either: the city already spoke Turkish and conservative peasants and nomadic pastoralists in the countryside cared little for modern education. Finally, the politics of memory faced the same consequences as it continued to coexist for years with the local oral tradition, and lately has come under pressure. All in all, the effectivity of Young Turk population policies is debatable at best.

Four important processes need to be taken into account when considering the question of effectivity: the nature of the Young Turk dictatorship, the unrealistic goals formulated by the regime, the resilience of peasant societies, and the counterproductivity of violence.

First of all, the Young Turk dictatorship was no monolithic moloch in perfect inner harmony. There was considerable rivalry and intrigue within the dictatorship, most notably between the army and the Interior Ministry. Bureaucrats at all levels competed to satisfy their superiors (including Talaat and Atatürk), and to draw attention to their solutions to the lingering ethnic ‘questions’ of the eastern provinces. In addition to rivalry, method and ideology was contested at times. Considerable dissent between political hawks and ethnic philanthropists bickering over whether integrally to deport or forcibly to assimilate the victims interrupted or retarded more efficient implementation. Although the regime appeared to have organized the population into a disciplinary unity and could ostensibly mobilize its resources to achieve goals swiftly, unacknowledged political conflicts beneath the surface and repression of public debate had heavy costs, with some achievements such as nation formation more a matter of propaganda than effectivity. Due to these processes, at the very root, the stage of policy formulation and implementation, a degree of inefficacy existed.

The problem of inefficiency touches upon the closely related issue of totalitarianism. In this thesis, the use of the term ‘totalitarian’ in characterizing the regime and its policies has been a deliberate and conscious choice. Although this is not the place to discuss at length how models of totalitarianism apply to the Young Turk regime (a major controversy in Turkish history), a caveat is in order. Totalitarian dictatorships can be defined by domination by a single, like-minded governing elite of all (or virtually all) organized political, economic, social and cultural activities in a country. There are five prime pillars of totalitarianism: first, an official ideology of exclusive and comprehensive claim based upon radical rejection of some aspects of the past and chiliastic claims for the future; second, a centralized, unitary movement claiming classless equality but organized hierarchically as a single, monopolistic party under authoritarian leadership; third, the co-optation, suppression, or often destruction

of opposition, the suppression not only of all forms of dissent but also of plurality of thought and opinion in general, including independent private organizations (such as religious orders); fourth, control of the means of communication and the mass media and their use for disseminating propaganda to inculcate the principles of the official ideology; and finally, the bureaucratic direction, via state control or socialization, of the economy and social relations. Totalitarianism constitutes an assault on the 'public sphere', and it is here that totalitarian states differ from traditional dictatorships: they build hegemony with respect to the broader ('total') scope of human behavior.<sup>1520</sup> All five of these facets apply to the Young Turk regime in various ways, but it is the realm of power relations that bears relevance for gauging the effectivity of Young Turk population policies.

As Hannah Arendt pointed out in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, in totalitarian dictatorships efficiency is so subordinated to control that the state often spends 50 to 75 % of its resources and energies enforcing control of one sort or another on its citizens.<sup>1521</sup> Studies of Stalinist totalitarianism expose that

no aspect of human life remained outside the presumed competence of the authorities, no autonomous organizations were allowed to exist, and fear governed the life of all, from the lowliest peasant to members of the Politburo. But of course that did not mean that this political system functioned like a well-oiled machine, that one man alone, namely Stalin, made all the decisions. On the contrary: totalitarian societies are never efficient. In this totalitarian society, properly constituted institutions were emasculated, and decisions were made in a haphazard fashion... It is a mistake to think that totalitarianism implies efficiency, that in such a system all orders are carried out as intended. In fact, the world has never known an efficient totalitarian regime.<sup>1522</sup>

In Turkey, too, control did not mean that the apparatus functioned well. The Young Turk regime between 1913 and 1950 faced an underdeveloped country with a poorly functioning governmental machinery and, despite having filled its ranks with loyal Young Turks, an ill-educated, venal bureaucracy lacking in public spirit. The country had no well-developed communication and transportation systems (key for efficient control), which only increased local power and bred confusion. True total control over society was only utopian, but this did not mean the regime was not totalitarian. In other words, rather than a social reality, totalitarianism is a political ambition by a dictatorial elite and has to be analyzed as such.

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<sup>1520</sup> Karl D. Bracher, "Totalitarianism," in: Philip P. Wiener (ed.), *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973-1974), vol.4, pp.406-11.

<sup>1521</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London: Harcourt Brace, 1973), p.419.

<sup>1522</sup> Peter Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp.110, 174.

Still, opinions on the nature of the Young Turk regime differ radically. Popular myths uphold the metahistorical idea that Atatürk established democracy in Turkey, and that the postwar Young Turk regime was a modern parliamentary democracy. But some scholars reject the comparison between the Young Turk regime and interwar European fascism and totalitarianism.<sup>1523</sup> Zürcher, on the other hand, writes that the Young Turk party had “totalitarian tendencies”, and continues to argue that what made it totalitarian was “the extreme nationalism, with its attendant development of a legitimizing historical mythology and racist rhetoric, the authoritarian character of the regime and its efforts to establish a complete totalitarian monopoly for its party of the political, social and cultural scene, the personality cult that developed around... Atatürk and İnönü... and the emphasis on national unity and solidarity with its attendant denial of class conflicts.”<sup>1524</sup> To this might be added the violent treatment of ethnic minorities. Despite these pointed insights, the field still lacks sophisticated, nuanced, and comparative studies of the nature of the Young Turk regime.

This thesis has attempted to take the debate a step further. Considering the Young Turk regime’s monist urge to gain mastery over social processes and human destinies, its ambition to monopolize power at the center, destroy or silence opposition, commit mass violence against its own citizens, develop a radical ideology and a personality cult around a single leader, and extinguish non-Turkish cultural life in the public sphere of the eastern provinces, the regime perhaps may be classified as a nationalist, colonial, totalitarian, and violent dictatorship. The local approach may provide a tentative solution for the effectivity paradox. According to one sociological study, occupational and colonial regimes can only be efficient when they enjoy local support from indigenous collaborators.<sup>1525</sup> Chapter 3 has argued that the local Ottoman Muslim elite of Diyarbekir collaborated with the Young Turk regime in return for power, significantly expediting and amplifying the destruction process. This may explain why the Armenian genocide was, in the words of one expert, a “completely successful genocide in its own nationalist terms”,<sup>1526</sup> but the anti-Kurdish campaigns were not as effective, for by that time the local elites were themselves targeted by the regime.

A second obstacle that hindered the effectivity of Young Turk population policies was their unrealistic expectations and goals. The Young Turks’ sociological imagination of what

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<sup>1523</sup> Zafer Toprak, “Bir Hayal Ürünü: ‘İttihatçıların Türkleştirme Politikası’,” in: *Toplumsal Tarih*, vol.146 (2006), pp.14-22; Interview with Zafer Toprak, *Taraf*, 10 November 2008.

<sup>1524</sup> Erik-Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), p.186.

<sup>1525</sup> Cornelis J. Lammers, *Vreemde Overheersing: Bezetten en Bezetting in Sociologisch Perspectief* (Amsterdam: Bakker, 2005).

<sup>1526</sup> Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.110.

identity was played an important role in this process. The Young Turks saw social identity as an axis of two diametrically opposed poles, with ‘Kurdishness’ at one extreme, and ‘Turkishness’ at the other. Cultural change along this axis was seen as zero-sum game: the more one became Kurdish, the less one would become Turkish. Their understanding of sociology was of such a nature they did not grasp that the identity always involves criteria of sameness and difference, and most of all is a process of perennial change. But in order to construct a monolithic Turkish identity that would exhibit characteristics of pure sameness, they considered the annihilation of those perceived differences necessary for the sustenance of the sameness.<sup>1527</sup> One scholar summarized this fallacy as follows:

The myth of inevitable conformity suggests that the outward spread of cultural influences from the center will make communities on the periphery less like their former selves - indeed, will dissipate their distinctive cultures - and will turn them, instead, into small-scale versions of the center itself. These culturally imperialistic influences will move outwards along the tracks of the mass media, of mass information, of spreading infrastructure, of mass production, national marketing and consumerism, ushering in a monolithic urban culture which will transform behaviour... that people can have their culture stripped away, leaving them quite void, then to be refilled by some imported superculture... in other words, that people are somehow passive in relation to culture: they receive it, transmit it, express it, but do not create it.<sup>1528</sup>

By locating an essentialized conception of culture at the core of Turkish identity, the regime contributed to an essentialization, reification, and politicization of culture. But social identity is rather a variational process of multiple, coexisting layers and frames which people invoke whenever useful and necessary.<sup>1529</sup> Therefore it was no surprise that imposing a Turkish national identity on Kurdish tribesmen and villagers overnight was not realistic for myriad reasons, most prominently because such a process only smeared a layer of unlikely identifications on existing identifications, or more precisely, provided the villagers with a relatively weak identity frame to draw from. So the new Turkish identifications were only used when travelling to the city and dealing with the state’s administrative organs or to western Turkey and communicating with non-Kurds. Turning peasants into Frenchmen may have been easier than turning Kurds into Turks.

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<sup>1527</sup> Alexander L. Hinton, “The Dark Side of Modernity: Toward an Anthropology of Genocide,” in: Alexander L. Hinton (ed.), *Annihilating Difference: The Anthropology of Genocide* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp.1-40, at p.12.

<sup>1528</sup> Anthony P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London: Tavistock, 1985), p.36.

<sup>1529</sup> Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp.95-107, 111-20.

One important corollary that arises from this is a third reason for inefficacy, the relative resilience of peasant societies, especially pastoralist highlanders.<sup>1530</sup> Peasant societies are relatively obdurate. For national identifications to trump regional ones in peasant societies requires an immense process of symbolization, and several generations to pass. In the words of one scholar, “The corollary idea is that peasants become national citizens only when they abandon their identity as peasants: a local sense of place and a local identity centered on the village or valley must be superseded and replaced by a sense of belonging to a more extended territory or nation.”<sup>1531</sup> An indicator of the resilience of the rural nature of Turkish society is the number of regional associations, organizations based on the locale – often a city, provincial town, or village. According to a study of these associations conducted in Istanbul in 1989, of all seven regions of Turkey, the Eastern and South-eastern regions far outweighed the other ones in the number of regional associations.<sup>1532</sup> One scholar who studied the lives of these ‘urban villagers’ added,

The village is a paramount feature in the lives of these migrants and has proved to be an organizing principle of behavior. A close sense of identity with the village of origin and its inhabitants is a pervasive element among most migrants. Concordantly, certain associated forces that are stabilizing in effect operate the lives of these peasants. These stabilizing forces flow from village social life and interaction, and reciprocally, enhance village solidarity even in an urban center some 900 miles away.<sup>1533</sup>

These local identifications remain significant for the easterners even in diaspora. This author has met elderly Diyarbekir Armenians in Amsterdam, Diyarbekir Kurds in Stockholm, Diyarbekir Syrians in Hanover, and Diyarbekir Bulgaro-Turks in Paris. When interviewed, ethnicity or religion mattered for some of them, Turkish citizenship mattered for none, but the locale mattered for all. Their offspring, however, are going through a different process. From the 1960s on, the long-term effects of comprehensive waves of urbanization and migration coupled with the emergence of new interacting generations accomplished more in the field of

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<sup>1530</sup> On the resistance of mountain regions to “the establishment of the state” and “dominant languages” see: Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), vol.I, pp.38-41.

<sup>1531</sup> Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p.8.

<sup>1532</sup> Harald Schöler, *Türkiye’de Sosyal Demokrasi: Particilik, Hemşehrilik, Alevilik* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1999), p.210. There are good reasons to presume that this number has grown considerably after the civil war of the 1990s emptied the eastern countryside and sent millions of villagers to the western metropolises. TESEV, *Overcoming a Legacy of Mistrust: Towards Reconciliation between the State and the Displaced* (Istanbul: Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation, 2006), pp.26-7.

<sup>1533</sup> Peter Suzuki, “Peasants Without Plows: Some Anatolians in Istanbul,” in: *Rural Sociology*, vol.31, no.4 (1966), pp.428-38, at 432; Günter Seufert, “Between Religion and Ethnicity: A Kurdish-Alevi Tribe in Globalizing Istanbul,” in: Ayşe Öncü & Petra Weyland (eds.), *Space, Culture and Power: New Identities in Globalizing Cities* (London: Zed, 1997), pp.157-76.

nation formation than Young Turk coercion ever did.<sup>1534</sup> The relative resilience of peasant societies seems to have caused a considerable setback in the efficacy of Young Turk social engineering.

Perhaps the most salient dimension of resistance, failure, and friction is the inevitable counterproductivity of mass violence. By launching these types of severely coercive policies the Young Turks exposed to the population their ideological motives for pursuing those policies, causing a serious backlash by many among the persecuted and victimized peoples who were traumatized by them. The memories of the mass violence were unresolved, not dealt with, and unsettled. One scholar noted that the most important Ottoman legacy relates to issues stemming from requited and unrequited nationalism: “Armenian nationalism, Kurdish nationalism were thwarted... Memories of bloody engagements with the Ottoman Turks, and cries of genocide, coupled with feelings of inadequacy that accompany the failure to achieve nationhood, poisoned and continue to poison the relationships between Armenians and Turks, and Kurds and Turks.”<sup>1535</sup> The Young Turks saw an East where a Turkish majority needed to be established by force. But by treating the territory as if it was on the verge of secession (as Greece, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Macedonia, or Albania had been), the Young Turks significantly contributed to the production of a nationalist politicization of the Kurdish-inhabited territories.

It took a few decades for the revenge of the past to erupt. The backfiring of Armenian and Kurdish traumas was a process that developed as new generations were confronted by and discovered their bloody pasts and responded to them, ranging from internal discussions to non-violent protests, and later into political violence. On 20 January 1975, a group of Lebanese Armenians founded the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) in Beirut. The ASALA began carrying out assassinations of Turkish diplomats around the world. Three years later, on 27 October 1978, the Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK) was founded by a group of Kurdish students and activists. In its initial phase, the PKK also began assassinating Turkish state officials and Kurdish “collaborators” in the East. For the Turkish authorities, these acts of violence were perceived as sudden outbreaks from a clear blue sky. But they were not: Armenian and Kurdish-nationalist political violence was a desperate attempt to make their political cases and historical grievances heard to the international audience. It did not take long for the two organizations to find each other, united

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<sup>1534</sup> For a discussion of these processes see: Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), chapter 9, “The Production of Locality”, pp.178-99.

<sup>1535</sup> Norman Itzkowitz, “The Problem of Perceptions,” in: L. Carl Brown (ed.), *Imperial Legacy: The Ottoman Imprint on the Balkans and the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp.30-38, at pp.35-6.

in combating their common enemy, launching coordinated attacks on Turkish consulates. Although there were clear differences between the two organizations, one pivotal theme united them, besides leftist ideology and territorial claims on the eastern provinces: their allegations of violence suffered by their peoples under the Young Turk regime.<sup>1536</sup> ASALA's spearhead was its demand for genocide recognition, and the PKK too accused the Turkish state of genocide against the Kurds. These traumas continue to linger, as Turkish governments have persistently tried to deflect responsibility for discussing and coming to terms with this difficult past. This knot of inextricable traumatic memories remains tightly tied.

Ultimately, when it came to the state's policies and the population's responses, the types of population policies recounted in this study to a large extent failed, not because they were Turkish but primarily because they were of a violent nature. The population of the eastern provinces resisted, not because it differed ethnically, but primarily because it was a peasant society.

This study has set out to develop the theoretical argument that homogenization in the nascent European nation-state system was an unintended but directional process (a blind process), but as it spread out into the rest of the world, it became intended and directional, imposed and organized by political elites seeking to build nation states. These political elites that emerged, first from the ashes of the the great multi-ethnic dynastic land empires and later during the process of European decolonization, saw the nation state as a template, the protector of their own culture, the opponent of cultural imperialism, and the basis of collective self-reliance. Although throughout time this theory has proven reliable and true, it overlooks the effectivity aspect of nation formation. In building the nation state, nationalist elites' designs were often confronted with ethnic realities on the ground. Ethnic groups, with or without organized nationalist leadership, often contested the nation state's rule over their people and territory. In some nation states, these disputes were mediated and the claims of minorities accommodated; in others, a combination of government intransigence and minority resistance escalated political disputes into violent conflicts. In the latter cases, the nation formation process failed. The theory of the expanding nation-state system, therefore, needs to take into account the reality that the expansion process functions under two restrictions: popular consent, and the infeasibility of absolute homogeneity.

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<sup>1536</sup> Khachig Tölölyan, "Terrorism in Modern Armenian Political Culture," in: *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol.4, no.2 (1992), pp.8-22; Nur Bilge Criss, "The Nature of PKK Terrorism in Turkey," in: *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, vol.18, no.1 (1995), pp.17-38.

Homogenizing forces remain an important feature of societies where nation formation has been problematic and painful. One important question remains unanswered: given these restrictions, why do political elites launch policies to increase homogeneity in their societies? Surely, there can never be such a thing as objective homogeneity, not even in cultural or ethnic terms, no matter how much nationalist elites would wish it so?<sup>1537</sup> For this reason, it might be more fruitful to conceptualize this problem in terms of homogenizing processes versus dehomogenizing processes. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, there is an axis of tension between these two types of processes. In Europe, the interwar ideal of a pure homogeneous nation state has given way to principles of consociationalism and co-existence of regional cultures. Processes of heterogenization also seem to be pioneered in Europe: whereas the once persecuted Hungarian minority in Slovakia now enjoys its own schools and media, the Muslim minority in western India still lives under threats of violent persecution. Now, as the European Union presses for educational reform and instruction in autochthonous languages and cultures in Turkey and elsewhere, the topic is now more current than ever.<sup>1538</sup>

Genocide, deportations, and forced migration destroyed historical regions and emptied multicultural cities, clearing the way for modern nation states. The mass murder and displacement of elites uprooted traditions and precluded alternative futures. The transformations in the societies affected by this whirlwind of population policies was of an ontological character. Countries such as Turkey, Greece, or Syria were profoundly shaped by phenomena such as forced migration. The elites organizing these processes did not work with a limited set of assumptions but a broad-brush model of human societies gravitating around the concept of the blank slate, the notion that society is fully malleable through the conditioning or crafting of its individuals. But as one researcher has pointed out, “the Blank Slate had, and has, a dark side. The vacuum that it posited in human nature was eagerly filled by totalitarian regimes, and it did nothing to prevent their genocides. It perverts education, childrearing, and the arts into forms of social engineering... It is an anti-life, anti-human theoretical abstraction.”<sup>1539</sup> Authoritarian and violent social engineering seems to be a self-defeating, perhaps self-destructive process launched by political elites that use violence as a routine technique of statecraft. These elites underestimate the fact that the consequences of mass violence are irreversible, especially if no concentrated effort at developing forms of justice are employed.

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<sup>1537</sup> Walker Connor, “Illusions of Homogeneity: Myths of Hemispheric, Continental, Regional, and State Unity,” in: Id., *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp.118-43.

<sup>1538</sup> European Parliament, Resolution 1519, 28th Sitting (4 October 2006), “The Cultural Situation of the Kurds.”

<sup>1539</sup> Steven Pinker, *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature* (London: Allen Lane, 2002), p.421.