

From the Desk of the Editor

Many of the challenges Turkey faces today –from ongoing domestic political disputes to impasses in neighborhood relations– are rooted in the region’s past. On the occasion of the centennial of the onset of World War I, in this issue of TPQ, we explore historical legacies in Turkey and across its neighborhood. In doing so, we reflect on the effects of history on current politics of identity and on geostrategic alignments in the region.

Focusing on key dynamics taking place in Turkey and its neighborhood, particularly in the post-Ottoman geography, we trace the role of collective memories and narratives in fueling both ethnic and religious prejudices. We also examine the demands for rights and recognitions stemming from past persecutions and injustices. With a constructive and future-oriented outlook, we aim to highlight lessons learned from past experiences and to identify inclusive models of citizenship and leadership that can bridge existing divides.

In many ways, this issue’s exploration of historical legacies is a timely one. In recent years, various episodes of Ottoman and Republican Turkish history have been evoked in a process of reframing or reconceptualizing Turkish identity, domestic power struggles, and the country’s regional position. The result has been rather convoluted, at times suggesting “a politically expedient” memory.

Some of the larger questions we believe this compilation of articles sheds light on include: Is Turkey gradually moving towards a post-nationalist model? If so, what is the new identity and vision that is being forged? Who are its “others”? Are the trends in revisiting history rendering Turkey more European, more Middle Eastern, or more Eurasian, or something different altogether?

In reflecting on these concepts, a question that comes to mind is whether one of the reasons Turkey is so deeply divided today is that, while the former state ideology has been dismantled (at least in part), a newly uniting vision has not yet been settled upon. This vacuum has led to a lack of confidence among various segments of society about what the future holds, an uncertainty that has been fueled by the polarizing rhetoric coming out of Ankara. Not only ethnic and religious minorities, but also conservatives, liberals, and other segments of society are focused on their own exclusive experiences of past victimhood. Adding to this, the shifting geostrategic power balances in the region render it difficult for the country to define who it is and where it belongs. The responsibility of forging a vision that can meet the

demands for rights and liberties of all segments of the country lies with the political leadership. While cynicism abounds regarding Turkey's EU integration track, the European model of pluralistic, liberal democracy seems to be the single most viable solution to the high tensions that are taking a toll on Turkey's future.

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu kicks off the issue with an analysis of how the history of the Ottoman Empire has been perceived in reductionist, exclusionary ways in the narratives of nation-states that were born out of its disintegration. Hostilities that came about in the final years of the Empire were presented in these narratives as if they had been alive for centuries – thus creating deep divides on the basis of fault-lines such as Christian/Muslim. To create a unified community, this “reconstructed account of history” presupposes that a collective national identity existed prior to the Ottoman era, one that simply later reasserted itself. Davutoğlu outlines the “melting pot” features of the Ottoman Empire, particularly as related to Armenians living throughout Anatolia. He argues that initiating an understanding of the history of Armenian-Turkish relations with 1915 as a starting point is “unjust” and takes hostage the future of Turks and Armenians.

The foreign minister notes that in the run-up to 1915, Turks were fighting for their survival and independence on a number of fronts. He reminds readers of the external interventions by the Great Powers who actually wanted to see problems between Turks and Armenians grow. With the conviction that a one-sided memory inevitably creates enmity, Davutoğlu underlines that both Turks and Armenians need to question their collective memories in order to build a “just memory.” Emphasizing the importance of maintaining an open dialogue, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu refers to the condolence message issued by the Turkish Prime Minister on 23 April 2014 as a “bold step.”

The condolence message acknowledging the Armenian suffering was perceived in Turkey as an opening that would enable a more vigorous debate of this issue among wider segments of Turkish society. Among Armenians, however, it was widely perceived as a “repackaged denial.” The contrasting reception of the message is emblematic of just how far apart the mainstreams of the two societies are in terms of narratives and expectations – both indisputably shaped by events of history.

One of the aims of the statement was to reiterate the interest of the Turkish side in establishing a joint historical commission to “study the events of 1915 in a scholarly manner.” Skepticism about the idea of a history commission has abounded since the release of the protocols initialed between Ankara and Yerevan in 2009; however, the notion still remains rather abstract in public debate.

To inform readers about the paradigms upon which such historical commissions function and how they contribute to “laying the foundations of a new coexistence,” Special Envoy of the Swiss Government for Dealing with the Past and the Prevention of Atrocities Mò Bleeker presents a number of case studies from other areas of the world, outlining principles such as “the right to know,” guaranteed access to information, and autonomy of the work geared at finding truths. One of the usual consequences of fact-finding, Bleeker’s article explains, is the transformation of perceptions, narratives, and attitudes towards the “other,” –be it the victim or the perpetrator– so that the “other” is not viewed as a compact and homogeneous group. Decoding “why” and “how” tragic things happened and preserving the range of collective memories enables forward-looking policies to emerge, so that history can be “lived with” and a future that is not determined by history can be forged. Bleeker’s framework offers the opportunity to reconsider the concerns that have been voiced regarding a prospective historical commission in the context of Armenia and Turkey.

Further contributing to a reconsideration of history in the Turkey-Armenia case, Istanbul Policy Center Senior Scholar, Professor Cengiz Aktar, explains how democratization has opened space for various forms of dissent against official policies and narratives in Turkey. In this context, Aktar presents the active search of Turkish citizens for memories rooted in their families’ past as a “quest to remember”, one which is transforming Turkish society.

Aktar, who spearheaded the 2008 “I Apologize” campaign directed toward descendants of Ottoman Armenians, points to the work of voluntary citizen initiatives in widening the segment of citizens of Turkey that are now conscious of the massacre of Armenians in Anatolia. This consciousness has brought up other painful, subconscious memories that have not been come to terms with, such as the escape of Muslims from massacre in the Balkans and the Northern Caucasus – which may explain an extent of the lack of empathy towards Armenian victims and their descendants. He concludes that today, change is being driven by society, as it should be for purposes of coherence and sustainability, but notes that this explorative memory journey’s outcome and society’s capacity to influence legislative processes remains to be seen.

Philip Gamaghelyan and Sergey Rumyansev’s article adds a regional perspective to this issue’s discussion of memory and history, demonstrating how narratives of the past serve to perpetuate conflicts in the South Caucasus. Gamaghelyan, Co-director of the Imagine Center for Conflict Transformation, and Rumyansev, Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Institute for European Ethnology of Humboldt University, place

history curricula of South Caucasus countries in the dual context of the European “scientification” of history and the ideological motives behind history education in the Soviet Union. An important take-away from Gamaghelyan and Rumyansev’s article is that change in a state’s ideology does not preclude the continuation of the use of history education to promote those narratives that suit the ideological needs of the new political order being forged.

As nation-states formed in the 19th and early 20th century, history was revised to aid the construction of unified national identities, and shaped social consciousness *via* mass education. Critics of the legitimacy attributed to positivist history studies pointed out that history is a narrative; memories are often constructed in light of current needs and concerns and collective memories are selective. While the co-authors note that in today’s Western Europe history is “largely accepted to be an interpretation, and students learn to approach what they read critically and analytically,” this understanding has not spread to the South Caucasus, Turkey, or Russia.

Gamaghelyan and Rumyansev highlight that in the South Caucasus, history education serves as a “propaganda machine serving nationalist and exclusivist agendas,” demonstrating that it has been professional historians who have shaped the commonly held views that conflicts in the region are natural and ancient. They point out that using history education to raise militaristic societies and obedient citizen-patriots does not make them safer. In this light, the authors argue that comprehensive reform of the structure and content of history education is a necessary condition for progress and development in the South Caucasus. Because the learning of history across the region is interconnected, a cross-border approach to tackling this impediment to conflict resolution is particularly important.

Expanding on the analysis of Soviet legacies on current conflicts, Lithuanian Member of Parliament Dr. Egidijus Vareikis suggests that the roots of such conflicts lie in the disregard of religious and ethnic cultural components in the creation of a Soviet identity. The Soviets’ denial of these elements of human identity led those who embraced their importance to go underground, resulting in people practicing their religion and learning about history in informal family or clan settings, outside the official public realm. Vareikis highlights the importance of future-oriented national education for former Soviet countries that lie outside of the EU, as well political leadership to rally people around a new vision and model. Rather than applying classical conflict resolution methods, Vareikis argues that what is important is to bring about environments where different identities can co-exist and come together around a future vision. Countries of Central Europe, he says, can play a crucial role in fostering this direction among non-EU former Soviet countries.

Focusing on the period of 1912-18 in the Ottoman Empire, Alexandros Massavetas contributes a refreshing and insightful perspective on this issue's themes derived from his study of Greek novels and memoirs. He highlights the ways in which these forms of literature depict a "moving from a state of lethargic bliss to one of agony, death, and destruction." He relates the story of the gradual descent of "Greeks born as Ottoman subjects" following the Balkan Wars. From the stirring of enmity against Greeks by the Muslims who had been forced out of Greece to the Greek subjects' efforts to evade the Ottoman military service draft and mandatory Turkish classes, the rise of nationalist fevers on both sides comes alive in literature. While the developments of 1912-18 initiated a chain of events which eventually forced all of the writers quoted in this article to leave their homeland forever, Massavetas observes that nostalgia for the golden years and longing for the "lost homeland" is what dominates the accounts. Most writings drawn upon in this article have "become an inseparable part of the Greek school curriculum" and some were adapted to film, thus shaping collective historical memory.

Nefin Dinç, director of the documentary film *The Other Town*, provides a personal account of what led her to making films about Turkish and Greek perceptions of each other. By sharing examples from the documentary, which she made with Hercules Millas in 2011, she elucidates the ways in which myths about the "other" have been constructed and perpetuated. Both Greeks and Turks repeat claims about the other which they take for granted and never stop to question, she notes. As such, Dr. Dinç introduces a notion that is elaborated on in other articles: that what is perceived as a "memory" is often a product of a deliberate and systematic process of transfer. It is not only education, but family stories and the media that perpetuate the negative perceptions that become entrenched in the subconscious. Dinç relates incidents that depict how the past is constructed selectively –by exaggerating the negative side of the "other" and "forgetting" its positive side– to be in harmony with the general national theme. She also points out that these myths were sustained by the lack of communication between two societies. Much conscious effort is needed to get over the prejudices one grows up with, however, Dinç notes, more opportunities to meet the other can help overcome stereotypes and can ignite self-reflection about "memories".

Laki Vingas, the elected representative of the Non-Muslim Foundations in Turkey, also picks up on the role of history in shaping the treatment of identity groups in Turkey, focusing his discussion on the experiences of non-Muslim minorities in the Ottoman and Republican Turkish state. Mr. Vingas points out to the role of the charitable foundations in maintaining the identities of non-Muslim populations

in Turkey. He highlights the difficulties non-Muslim populations faced during the identity formation process of the young Turkish Republic. Vingas emphasizes the importance of making a new constitution to ensure a harmonious multicultural existence in Turkey.

Building on this issue's analysis of the role of history in identity formation, Professor Richard Hall, of Georgia Southwestern State University in the U.S., provides an analysis of the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 and explains how they created an area of nationalist states and ongoing disputes in a territory that was formerly multicultural. He argues that nationalist movements in the Balkans led to the collapse of the Ottoman *millet* system in the region. Professor Hall also asserts that these wars were a first step towards the modernization of the region.

The 8-month long Gallipoli Campaign (the Battle of Çanakkale), in which the Ottomans fought against Britain and France on the Dardanelles Strait, is known as the greatest Ottoman victory during WWI – a defining moment with high human costs to defend the motherland. It formed the basis for the founding of the Republic eight years later. Today, partially as a response to Armenian campaigns to mark their loss in 2015, Turkey has been geared toward making 2015 about Gallipoli. Ensuring that the world knows about the stage of war in the Western Anatolia at the time of the massacres of Armenians in the East also feeds into the argument that the ill decisions and management of Armenians forced deportation was a result of overwhelmed survival struggles rather than an intent to exterminate, as the term “Genocide” would suggest. While both fronts are critical to understand the divergent and deep-rooted instincts and psychologies of today, unfortunately in the public debate, commemorating one or the other has become like a choice, a distinction of which values, which vision one holds.

Reflecting on the legacy of the 1915 Gallipoli Campaign, Kenan Çelik, professional tour guide of the sites of Gallipoli, contributes a unique, on-the-ground perspective. Gallipoli has become a site of pilgrimage and conciliation, not a symbol of division, he explains. Çelik's article analyzes the history of memorialization of the First World War Gallipoli battlefields in the context of the culture of commemoration and bilateral relations between Turkey and Australia, as well as in the context of the budding tourism industry. In addition to claiming that the Gallipoli experience was significant in the shaping of national identity in both Turkey and Australia, Çelik also emphasizes that it was the Australians who first spearheaded the tradition of commemorating Gallipoli. Çelik predicts that in 2015, the 100th anniversary of the Gallipoli Campaign, the number of people visiting Gallipoli is likely to peak.

İlter Turan, Professor of International Relations at Istanbul Bilgi University, also explores the direct and indirect effects of historical legacies on Turkey's contemporary developments, with a specific focus on the dynamics of World War I. Professor Turan, elaborating on his piece for the German Marshall Fund that was published earlier this year, reflects on the transition from a multinational empire to a national secular republic that was ethnically and religiously much more monolithic. Drawing on the provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne, Turan lays out an argument for why Turkey was able to emerge from the ashes of World War I more successfully than other defeated nations. The adverse effects of modern Turkey's state-building process is also analyzed by Turan. He particularly points to the ethnic homogenization process as the stimulus of the Kurdish nationalist movement today.

Also tying in analysis of the events of WWI, Dr. Einat Wilf, Adjunct Fellow with the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and Senior Fellow with the Jewish People Policy Institute, provides a historical perspective on current events in Turkey's southern neighborhood. Wilf conceptualizes the popular uprisings denoted by the term "Arab Spring" as a delayed extension of the awakening that took place from the European "Spring of Nations" from 1848 onwards. Wilf asserts that it was not the ideal of national expression or the demand for democracy of the nations living under Ottoman rule that brought about the new states in the Middle East, but rather it was the result of WWI. In the Arab geography, a "delayed awakening" is taking place now, against rulers who do not represent the identity frames of the people and were placed in the region to rule artificial states created in the European mold.

Dr. Wilf, who was formerly a member of the Israeli Parliament, writes of the Middle East: "The forced transformation of the Ottoman Empire from empire to artificial states shaped by external interests meant that for nearly a century the externally and arbitrarily drawn borders of the new states were held together by sheer force and, when available, legendary sums of oil money." Wilf observes that as the Cold War's domination of the geopolitics of the Middle East recedes, a new architecture is emerging. Her article elaborates on the geostrategic realm in which regional powers are engaging in a web of shifting alliances to protect their immediate national interests and the security of their regimes. Traditional sphere-of-influence regional politics—similar to the Europeans of the 19th century—can be observed among countries including Turkey, Russia, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. She points out that countries like Syria, Iraq, and Libya are currently torn between such regional players.

Turning from the focus on identity frames directly to the current domestic challenges of Turkey, this issue of TPQ delves into two of the most contested identity debates: the Kurdish and the Alevi issues.

One of the central and ongoing challenges to the Turkish nation-building process has been the Kurdish nationalist movement. Solving the entrenched conflict with Kurdish nationalists has surfaced as a priority in recent years, no less because of the high costs for Ankara of the ongoing conflict, shared religion, and the reality of Kurds' rising power in the Middle East.

In her article, Maya Arakon, Associate Professor of Political Science and International Relations at Süleyman Şah University, highlights the historical roots of the Kurdish struggle, analyzing their demands for more autonomy under Ottoman rule and the effects of the Turkification attempts to which Kurds were subjected from the early 20th century onwards.

Arakon's contribution draws attention to the state of "anxiety over the Empire's downfall" among the founders of the Turkish Republic, induced by the incremental disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. The Turkish state set out to unify people around the same language, the same culture, the same collective memory, and the same religious belonging. Implementation of the theoretical ideal of having no social, ethnic, and religious distinctions involved repression – of a nature and to a degree with which the country has still not been able to come to terms. Arakon's analysis also highlights the long-standing, complex interplay between Sunni Islam and Turkishness. which is also echoed in other articles of this issue.

The democratization and historical recognition that has been set in motion in Turkey has opened a Pandora's Box: now that some fundamental taboos about challenging the previous state ideology and establishment have been overcome, perpetuating others is no longer viable. Containing the process of recognition of past wrongs, denial of rights and freedoms for other communities can accordingly create more political friction. As such, denying the demands of Alevi or neglecting their sense of social and political exclusion has become unsustainable.

The Alevi issue, which goes to the heart of democracy and secularism in Turkey, is taken up in this issue of TPQ by Nil Mutluer, Assistant Professor at Nişantaşı University. Mutluer explains there are four main problem areas to resolve: difficulties encountered in the transmission of the belief, demands that *cemevi* be officially recognized as places of worship, debates revolving around compulsory courses on religion in secondary education, and discrimination that Alevi experience in everyday life and in the workplace. Outlining the current state of public debates in these four problem areas, this article calls for an exploration of paths toward pluralistic secularism and democratization for all citizens, including the Alevi community. Accordingly, Mutluer advocates, "building a new constitution that will protect

freedoms of thought, conscience, and belief without discriminating on the basis of religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and/or class.”

Deniz Sert, Assistant Professor of International Relations at Özyeğin University, traces the roots and evolution of Turkey’s immigration policies. Across Europe, large waves of forced migration took place in the first half of the 20th century as part of efforts to forge homogenous national identities. Partially because the founders of the Republic attributed the Ottoman demise to its multiethnic and multicultural features, immigrants who could speak Turkish and were of Sunni-Hanafi conviction received preferential treatment. In light of the notion of “who is welcome,” Sert analyzes the variances in Ankara’s policy responses towards different refugee movements – from Iran, Iraq, Bulgaria, Bosnia, and Kosovo, up to the current situation of Syrian refugees in Turkey.

Among other factors, Turkey’s relations with its neighbors are defined by historical events, and the effects of these events take many different forms. Turkey’s diverse population includes many citizens who share kinship with neighboring countries. Their sympathies to various actors in the neighborhood, largely rooted in the mass deportations experienced in the 18th and 19th centuries, can both be an asset or a complexity in managing Turkey’s foreign policy. In this issue of TPQ, explorations of one example from the Balkans and another from Eurasia enrich this debate.

Alida Vračić, founder and executive director of a think-tank in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Populari, assesses Turkish influence over Bosnia, historically and in recent years. Vračić points to the multiethnic structure of the Bosnia and Herzegovina and the mixed feelings of its constituent nations towards the Ottoman legacy. She explains that Turkey’s prioritization of the Bosniak community has the potential to exacerbate already existing internal divisions within the country. Vračić asserts that Turkey’s contribution to the economic development of BiH would be of greatest value for the relations, and argues that BiH should be more proactive in putting forth its preferences to shape the agenda of bilateral relations.

A number of questions raised in Vračić’s article regarding Turkey’s image and influence in the Balkans are also applicable to countries in the Caucasus and the Middle East. In Turkish outreach, too much emphasis on ethnic, religious, or linguistic bonds, or on Ottoman legacy is not always the optimal path to maximizing influence.

Orkhan Gafarli, an analyst covering the Eurasian region at BILGESAM Center for Strategic Studies in Ankara, focuses on the foreign policy involvement of Turkish citizens who trace their origins to the North Caucasus and who immigrated to

Ottoman lands as a result of massacre and deportation in the second half of the 19th century. What are commonly referred to as “Circassians” in Turkey became well-integrated in Turkish society, actively took part in the War of Independence (the Liberation War) and the founding of the Turkish Republic, and took up influential public positions thereafter. Circassian diaspora groups, mobilized as associations and lobbying connections in Ankara, became more involved in foreign policy issues after the end of the Cold War. More recently, as different identities have gained visibility in Turkey and in light of international debates triggered by the controversies of the 2014 Winter Olympic Games being held in Sochi, the Circassians in Turkey have experienced a new form of “awakening.” The attendance of the Turkish Prime Minister at the opening ceremony while the 150th anniversary of the Circassian Genocide was being commemorated was a source of sadness for the community. Gafarli argues that as Ankara’s relations with both Tbilisi and Moscow have strengthened, the leverage of these groups has weakened. Moreover, he stresses that divergences with regard to views of Moscow versus Tbilisi among different groups from the North Caucasus have weakened their lobbying strength.

In addition to the Turkish citizens of North Caucasus origin, those of Crimean Tatar origin also have expectations regarding how Turkey relates to Russian action in the neighborhood. However, concern about tensions with Moscow –exacerbated by factors such as Turkey’s dependence on Russian energy– have inhibited Ankara from taking coherent, principled positions towards the crisis in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea. Similar dynamics were at play with regard to the Russia-Georgia War in 2008.

On a separate but related note, the arguments employed by Russia concerning the legitimacy of intervention to protect Russian speakers or passport holders in the neighborhood have implications both for conceptions of citizenship and for regional security. Many of the leading unresolved conflicts in the region –from Cyprus to Nagorno-Karabakh– have stemmed from the logic of protecting kin (or other communities of interest) across borders. Many new conflicts can be envisioned if this logic to justify military intervention is employed by a range of regional powers.

Gearing up to centennials of the 1915 Gallipoli Battle and the 1923 establishment of the Turkish Republic, Turkish political rhetoric has been increasingly emphasizing the so-called intention of European powers’ to weaken the Turkish nation. Stirring up a sense of vengeance against Europe, this rhetoric is all too often packaged with references to how Western conspiracies –geared at stoking domestic and regional problems to curb Turkey’s power– are at play today. While these theories may deliver immediate populist gains, they dismiss –and put at risk– the contribution of

Euro-Atlantic partners and institutions in strengthening Turkey's economy, rule of law, public services, rights, liberties, and security. Ultimately, it is a stronger Turkish democracy that will be the best defense against threats to Turkey's stability, and the main asset for Turkish soft power in the region.

Entering our 13th year of publication, we are proud to have always been particularly attentive to including divergent views in TPQ. In this issue, we try to make historical and current debates come alive by including views from practitioners, and even more multidisciplinary perspectives than usual. With such a diverse and rich set of contributions, we offer our readers a critical rethinking of William Shakespeare's quote, suggesting that history sets the conditions of the present, that "what's past is prologue."

The premium corporate sponsor of this issue is Finansbank, to which we extend special thanks. With this issue we welcome Genel Energy among our corporate sponsors. We appreciate the continuing support of our other corporate sponsors: Ford, Akbank, Turcas Petrol, İş Bank, Odea Bank, BP Turkey, and ABC Detergent. As always, we are particularly grateful for the standing generous support of Kadir Has University. We are also thankful for the contribution to our outreach provided by *Hürriyet Daily News*.

As the TPQ team, we are grateful to the authors of this issue for sharing their expertise and insights, and we welcome feedback from our readers.

Diba Nigâr Göksel