A genocide, three constituencies, thoughts for the future

Halil Berktay

Thank you for inviting me to this special occasion. Over the past seven or eight years, I have become accustomed to talking about (various aspects of) the Armenian question mostly in Turkey, to Turkish audiences. Of course, there have also been some international conferences. Notable in this regard was the first-ever Turkish-Armenian historians’ workshop of Spring 2000 in Chicago, organized by professors Müge Göçek and Ron Grigor Suny, which will probably come to be assessed in future histories as a crucial turning point. About a year later, i.e. in Spring 2001, there was another conference in Muhlheim, which however was marred by too much shouting and yea- or nay-saying (not surprising, perhaps, given that the audience was tensely polarized between a German-Turkish half and a German-Armenian diaspora half). Over 28-30 October 2004, there was a conference in Venice organized by Professor (Father) Levon Boghos Zekiyan, as well as an October 2005 NATO Rose-Roth Seminar in Yerevan. But apart from these, I cannot really say that until recently I have had that much contact with Armenian (or Armenian diaspora) audiences.

Now in the States over the last two months or more, however, all that has been changing rather quickly, both by force of location and the tragic events enveloping us. While I was teaching for a month at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, first there was, there had to be, a major tribute meeting for Hrant Dink; and then there was also an evening that Murat Belge and I spent talking to and with an audience from the Armenian community of Detroit and its suburbs. Here, now, is this one-day symposium which again I feel privileged to be a part of -- though not for purposes of a nebulous or ill-defined notion of “dialogue”. For example, in the two presentations (by Henry Theriault and Peter Balakian), my perception is that there have been too many different concepts of “dialogue” floating around. Thus, “dialogue”, so-called, with Turkey or Turkish officialdom has been mentioned, and reference has been made to the ill-born, state-stacked, and therefore unsurprisingly abortive TARC as one of its second-track channels or avenues. All these are vertically embedded in, and a reflection of, institutionalized power relations, and therefore what they make out to be “dialogue” is actually bargaining in the narrow marketplace or diplomacy sense, for which I have no taste whatsoever. On the other hand, there can also be genuine multi-lateral conversations, aimed at insuring an autonomous efflorescence of information flows, opening more and more space for mutual un-learning and re-learning processes, and ultimately changing both “our” and “their” mentalities, between Turkish and Armenian civil society.

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1 This is the full and expanded text of what I originally prepared for the “Armenians and the Left” conference on 31st March 2007. It is considerably longer even than what was probably an insufferably long talk on the day, since I have incorporated both what I had already written but did not read, and also some subsequent additions.

2 In fact, liberated scholarship and civil society dissidence, on the one hand, and second-track diplomacy, on the other, can be perceived by some people to be contrary to each other. In Spring 2000, there was the Chicago conference, as I have already noted. Later that year, I spoke out on the Armenian genocide in the mainstream Turkish press, when, on 9th October 2000, the daily Radikal published a full-page interview with me done by Ms Neşe Düzül. There was a furore, and many more subsequently. I felt I had contributed to the cause of recognition and reconciliation. Not so, I was told by one of the organizers of the TARC enterprise. For some reason, his view was that I had ruined what they were trying to do. It is this same TARC that, in Turkish Daily News article that I have just seen on-line (on 19th April 2007), David Phillips credits with breaking “the taboo on discussing Armenian issues”. He writes : “The taboo on discussing Armenian issues was broken by the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission, which was established in 2001.”
elments, groups, leaderships, or individuals. As far as I am concerned, it is only this kind of lateral activity which really merits being addressed as dialogue.

A habitus of the Left

This is especially so, I would submit, at a conference under the broad title of “Armenians and the Left” -- where I might have preferred to take part not as a dialogue-bringer but as a comrade, if only history had been otherwise. I have various reasons for saying this, not the least being that I feel I have belonged to the Left, and not just a Turkish Left but a more international Left, from time immemorial. Well, not really from time immemorial, of course, but from my childhood onward, having been born into a rare Turkish Communist family and household (and a very intellectual one at that), since my father (Erdoğan Berktay) was a member of the old clandestine Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) that was the subject of a massive crackdown in 1951-52, at the height of the Korea-related tidal wave of McCarthyism that then hit Turkey. So inevitably, I retain ever-strong memories of his being taken away when I was four, and being away for a long time, first in prison and then in “internal exile”, eventually returning with a more finely-lined face, emerging into the limelight (though all too briefly) as a leading public intellectual in the 1960s. Meanwhile, I myself was growing up, through adolescence to youth and young adulthood, in this dense atmosphere where one talked all the time of the French and Russian revolutions, and of the Soviet Union, and the International Communist Movement, and of China, and Cuba, and new Third World struggles -- and precisely as part of that revolutionist culture, also of non-Marxist, non-Communist revolutions and revolutionaries, past and present, including most emphatically national-revolutionaries of an entire historical period when nationalism was (or was regarded as) a revolutionary ideology in close affinity with both liberal democracy and socialism, and was therefore contraposing itself to an entire generation of oppressive, defunct (Austro-Hungarian, Russian and Ottoman) empires.

This was why and how I became devoted to Chopin (persecuted by the Tsarist police), and not just for his Nocturnes but also for his Etude Revolutionnaire; and also to Byron not just for his ineffable love poetry but also for the heroic spirit which took him to fight and die at Missolonghi in the ranks of the Greek Revolution -- not because he was “anti-Turkish” as today Turkish nationalism makes him out to be, but because he was against “Ottoman despotism” as a Romantic revolutionary democrat. Now this is pretty much what I am likely to have thought of the ARF or the Dashnaksoutiun, too, if I had known of it (or them) in those days when I was still in my mid-teens, though I did not, because -- and here is the point -- although my household was very unusual for Turkey in the 1950s and 60s, imbued with this “proletarian internationalism” also fed by Enlightenment ideals, as well as this radical Left dislike of Turkish hard-nationalists (which of course were very anti-Left, anti-Communist, red-baiting, witch-hunting in those Cold War years), and as a result, we shared and cherished a liberated, conscientious refusal to regard the Greeks and other Balkan peoples or indeed the Armenians as “the enemies of the Turks”, nevertheless, despite all these ethical attitudes and positions,

(a) nationalism as such, as an ideology, was hardly ever discussed, dissected, criticized;

(b) in particular, not much was ever said about all those “national disputes” attending the breakup of empire, which national-revolutionaries of different countries had once fought over, and which continued to pit, now, various CPs against one
another -- other than that those bloody, disgraceful incidents could all be put down to imperialist, colonialist “divide and rule” conspiracies against our “good peoples”;

(c) even more specifically, nothing was said of the Armenian genocide, which of course was the greatest horror of all.3

This probably explains why, while growing up as an enlightened internationalist, and also as part of an isolated, persecuted, marginalized milieu, thereby coming to sympathize with other cases of marginalization, exclusion or persecution, I had no sense of the Armenian nationalism-revolutionaries of the early 20th century, because it was not part of the Left intellectualism and discourse that had become my habitus.

On top of this there came my own Left activism, first here in the US in the context of the Civil Rights and the anti-war movements of the 1960s (when I became part of a circle that eventually initiated the founding of the Yale chapter of the Students for a Democratic Society), and then back in Turkey, where my reaction to the defeat of both the Paris and the Prague Springs of 1968 led further and further away from a libertarian spirit into a more and more rigidly, dogmatically utopian platform. In brief, out of an extreme quest for purity, for a fundamentalist Marxism supposedly untainted by any human frailty or impurity, I became and remained a Maoist for two decades, going through all the travails of an entire Turkish generation under the two successive military coups of 12 March 1971 and 12 September 1980, when tens of thousands experienced cycles of arrest, torture, and harsh conditions of imprisonment. The mid- or late-80s, however, became a time of a more seriously critical, self-questioning. It was then that, taking my distances vis-à-vis any espousal, however “scientifically” theorized, of a violent revolution or of revolutionary violence, I sought to re-commit myself, now as a critical democrat and an independent Left-intellectual, to a less directly power-oriented and more cultural-educational vision of social change. In the wake of the collapse of the USSR and Yugoslavia, and the emergence of a new generation of national/ist bloodshed in the Balkans and in the Caucasus, as well as in southeastern Turkey (not to speak of Africa or elsewhere in what used to be called the Third World), I also started moving to a much deeper and comprehensive critical engagement with nationalism, and therefore also to a new universalism of Turkish, Greek, Balkan, Armenian and other scholars or intellectuals, all of us standing in opposition to “our own” nationalism, nationalist education, mythistories, textbooks, and conflict-inciting media -- or simply, in W. H. Auden’s words, to all the various sorts of “elderly rubbish that dictators talk / to an apathetic grave.”

Nevertheless, while all this has been happening, and my notions and many others’ notions of future utopias, and “long-distance” aims and objectives, have all been changing -- out of my four decades or so on the Left, I have still retained, I think, certain notions of strategy and tactics, and building alliances or even united fronts in pursuit of admittedly different and much more peaceful, much more democratic goals. So it is with this kind of background, experience and political culture, that I would like to address the two or three big questions of (1) the historical reality of 1915; (2) what to call it; and (3) how to go about getting it recognized today. Before I go further, however, I should like to make a brief statement about

3 In retrospect, I would put this down not only to considerations about the USSR and Soviet Armenia in a Cold War context, but also to Marxism’s, and especially Comintern and Third World Marxism’s unhappy marriage with nationalism at both a tactical-political and also a theoretical level. It was this entire edifice that resulted in the Turkish Left’s protracted unwillingness to challenge Kemalism over its two most sacrosanct taboos : the Kurdish question and the Armenian genocide. Why, after all, does even Nazım Hikmet have so little to say about the Armenians?
one paper in particular that has been given before me. I am against virtually everything that Henry Theriault has said and argued for in his presentation -- against his pseudo-philosophical, a-historical absolutes and essentialisms, against his self-righteous moralizing about an eternal Turkish “dominance” versus an equally eternal Armenian “victimhood”, and also against the frightfully patronizing, condescending “advice” that he has volunteered at various points -- such as his remarks about why dissident Turks should quickly move on from debating what to call 1915 to discussing reparations. But I suppose I should be thankful for this sort of discourse and position, since it so usefully represents all that I find problematic about certain Armenian attitudes.

The historical reality of 1915

“90th anniversary of the expulsion and extermination of the Armenians” (Zum 90. Jahrestag der Vertreibung und Vernichtung der Armenier). This was part of the title used for a one-day symposium held in Berlin on 18th April 2005. It was organized by the Heinrich Böll Foundation, and from Turkey it was Hrant Dink, Etyen Mahcupyan and I myself that had been invited, and participated. If you look at it, it is a pretty strong statement in itself, is it not -- “expulsion and extermination”? So, does this fit the definition of genocide? And if it does, as a verbal expression or statement does it become weaker or stronger, does it lose force or gather force because the g-word is not present? Is the term “genocide” absolutely necessary, at all times and under all circumstances, for any and all conversations regarding the events of 1915? Does it, in other words, happen to be an absolutely indispensable norm for all such conversations to conform to? Should its absence in the Berlin title be construed as denialism, and therefore a victory for (Turkish) nationalism or a defeat for the cause of historical truth? And if we start thinking always in this way, what are some of the possible consequences?

First things first. Whether we say the “massacring” or “the expulsion and extermination” or “the uprooting and annihilation” of Ottoman Armenians, or utilize any one of such long descriptions, does this fit the definition of genocide at least as understood by (or in terms of) the 1948 UN Convention? My answer is that it does, and that furthermore, we have to rethink why. My understanding of what happened in 1915 comprises the following key elements. During and in the wake of the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, the CUP (Unionist, or İttihatçı) leadership moved with great haste and alacrity to a new ideological position of regarding the remaining non-Muslim, non-Turkish populations of the Empire as intrinsically suspect. Already in 1913-14, this led to an initial ethnic cleansing of a large Greek population, estimated at around 100,000 to 150,000, from parts of Thrace and western Anatolia -- an expulsion achieved through methods of bullying and intimidation (short of outright bloodshed) that in retrospect appears very much like an unarmed dress rehearsal for what would happen in 1915. In between, the outbreak of World War I, and various events on the Eastern front, led to a further targeting of Armenians as unreliable and potentially treacherous. The war also put even greater power in the hands of the military triumvirate of Enver, Talat and Cemal, rendering their dictatorship even less accountable both to the Ottoman Parliament and to world public opinion, while simultaneously isolating Ottoman Armenians from Europe and the Great Powers. Under these circumstances, the Unionist leadership got parliament to pass a law legalizing tehcir or forced (internal) deportation and re-settlement. On that basis, when it came to implementation, Talat Pasha as Interior Minister sent out (and kept sending out) not one but two sets of orders from Istanbul to the provinces. The first set of orders, delivered through normal channels to all governors, sub-governors, or military garrison commanders, asked for all Armenians to be immediately rounded up and forcibly moved to pre-set destinations. This had to be done within forty-eight hours, and inevitably entailed
forcing Armenians to leave all their immovable wealth and properties behind, as well as a
good deal of their movable wealth, too (all of which were to be put at the disposal of special
government commissions which were expected to channel all this bounty into the war effort).
Hence among other things, this set of orders entailed not just a deracination but also a
massive, drastic and irreversible expropriation of virtually the entire Ottoman Armenian
community, effectively destroying its conditions of existence. Furthermore, let me emphasize
that no distinctions were made between, for example, loyal and law-abiding citizens (in the
eyes of the state) and those involved in or suspected of criminal activities; no evidence was
sought and given of Dashnak or Hinchak or other sympathies or affiliations. In other words,
both the law and this first set of executive orders relative to its implementation targeted (all)
Armenians for no other reason than that they were Armenians. In themselves, the orders could
be construed as formally legal (in the sense of being based at least partially on a previous act
of legislation), but were certainly not lawful (in the sense of conforming to any “spirit of the
laws” as commonly understood since Montesquieu, or in other words to the basic
requirements of a state of law. In effect, what they did was to remove the Ottoman Armenian
population from protection by and under that state of law. Just this much, therefore, is
roughly comparable to all the anti-Jewish persecution unchained by the Nazis from 1933 to
around 1941-42, that is to say prior to the launching of the Final Solution. Hence, too, just this
much is enough to satisfy article (c) of the current UN definition, which has to do with
“deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical
destruction in whole or in part” -- even if additional killings had not been involved.

But actually, such acts of mass murder were also involved, and systematically and on an
enormous scale, for Talat, the Nietzschean amoral “evil genius” of the Unionist leadership,
did not rest content with just this first set of orders, horrible as they were. In addition to his
official Interior Ministry headquarters, he also set up a second and parallel “deep state”
command center in his own apartment, replete with telephones and telegraphs, which he
started using to control his Special Organization field operatives. This Special Organization
(literally : Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa, henceforth TM) was the secret armed wing of the CUP, thus a
forerunner of many such “armed wings” that would become familiar in the course of the 20th
century, standing to the party in roughly the same relationship as the IRA to Sinn Fein, or for
that matter the SA’s to NASDAP -- though Hitler’s Brown Shirts were much more numerous
and public, while the Special Organization was narrow, elite and covert, comprising hard-
bitten secret agents receiving their orders only from Enver and Talat, and cloaked in totally
non-accountable anonymity. Ahead of the late April roundups that marked the beginning of
the end, Talat had already sent some of his top TM men into the region, and as convoys of
uprooted, destitute Armenian deportees began to move into central, eastern and southeastern
Anatolia, the latter came under attack from death squads of indeterminate mixture as well as
tribal groups that had themselves been forced out of the Caucasus by the Tsarist expansion
southward, and had therefore acquired a vindictive hatred for all things Christian, Armenian,
or otherwise smacking of complicity with Russia. Such primary massacres (in the sense of
being directly masterminded by the state\(^5\)) would then seem to have conveyed to the general

\(^4\) So unlawful were these orders in a broad sense, that numerous members of the Ottoman-Turkish bureaucracy
either refused to believe them (thinking that they were being tested by the center), or else did not want to
implement them. In many cases, these orders could therefore be implemented only after repeated commands and
dire warnings from Istanbul, and in some cases after the removal and replacement of the reluctant functionaries.

\(^5\) Do we have direct proof of these secret orders? No, we do not. That is to say, we do not have a single
telegram or two that we can point to as actually ordering state functionaries or operatives to slaughter this or that
group of Armenians. But we do have an enormous amount of indirect evidence, of circumstantial evidence, so
that in fact whether things that surface from illegality or extra legality, it is fairly clear what happened. We have
something very close to a smoking gun, in terms of present American political idioms.
public the message that the Armenians were “fair game”, as a result of which a more general “shooting season” appears to have opened, as, in an extreme situation of the sort that brings out the best and the worst in humanity, such worst elements of the local population, too, came forth in a series of secondary massacres to claim their share. On long marches in the desert or over other difficult terrain, the cold and the heat, as well as hunger, thirst, lack of sanitation, and the resulting outbursts of typhus or dysentery also took their toll -- as well as sheer brutalization at the hands of the gendarmes that were ostensibly there to guard and protect them. In the end, huge numbers died or were killed, frequently right in front of their parents or children, or their siblings, or other beloveds.

How many? No more than 250 to 400,000, as official or semi-official Turkish authors have claimed? Around 600,000 (or perhaps 800,000), as given by most 20th century editions of the Encyclopaedia Britannica? As many as 1 or even 1.5 million, to which ceiling Armenian statements on the subject have been tending to escalate over the last decade? I rather doubt the first and last figures, though that is not so important in itself. What really matters is that an entire people were subjected to sudden, drastic and comprehensive ethnic cleansing, most of which was compressed into a single year, and which, unfortunately, was rather comprehensively successful, so that basically the large and significant Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire came to an end.

Secondly, there is the question of intent. “Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group…’’ goes the 1948 definition (italics mine). A lot of denialist time and energy is invested on just this point, trying to demonstrate that there was no such intent with regard to the Armenians. It is at this point, too, that the Ottoman archives are brought in. On a very general level, what this reflects is the rather ethnocentric belief that the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth is to be found only and only in the Ottoman archives -- and that by implication, all else, anywhere else in the world, must be unreliable. More specifically, it is thereby argued that if there was any such intent of partial or total group destruction, it must be embodied in written directives; conversely, if we cannot find any such statement of purpose in the archives, the case for genocide must be thrown out. But of course, even the most powerful dictators hardly ever commit such things to paper, which is why we do not have written orders for the Holocaust either. Fortunately, such evil discretion notwithstanding, intent also becomes something deducible from the overall context and march of events, from the total picture -- and it is here that the targeting of all Armenians qua Armenians becomes its own proof. Last but not least, there is the question of ideological motivation. Not only politicians and journalists, but even some respectable scholars in Turkey have carelessly repeated clichés to the effect that given the late-developing nature of Turkish nationalism, there can have been

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6 Turkish nationalist discourse typically obliterates this distinction between primary and secondary in a causal sense, trying to make it seem as if whatever massacres that took place were purely the work of “bandits” which were both unpremeditated and could somehow not be prevented, though clearly, it was the signals emitted by the TM-organized primary massacres that emboldened the worst elements of the local population for the rest.

7 Once more, in Turkish nationalist apologetics there is the pretense that this was all that happened -- and that it was basically an unforeseen, unfortunate accident. Even supposing for a moment that there were no massacres, by what logic might the death of tens of thousands of detainees supposedly under state protection due to hunger, thirst or disease be regarded as not coming under the responsibility of that state?

8 From a population of around 1.5 million or more, only a few tens of thousands have been left. Such decimation notwithstanding, the latest “wisdom” from some varieties of denialism is that “even if there is a single survivor, it cannot be called genocide.”

9 Many of the retired diplomat Gündüz Aktan’s newspaper columns, for example, are devoted to legalistic hair-splitting around just this point.
no such nationalist ethnic cleansing logic behind the 1915 deportations and massacres.\textsuperscript{10} What this overlooks is, yes, the late but also the \textit{extraordinarily rapid} development of Turkish nationalism under the impact of Italy’s invasion of Tripoli in 1911 and then the Balkan Wars of 1912-13. Recent research by both Taner Akçam and Fuat Dündar clearly demonstrates the following two points: (a) the CUP leadership, and Talat in particular, had actually come up with a new policy for the Turkification of Anatolia; (b) it was in this context that over 1913-15, the Armenians (along with the Greeks and others) were coming to be eyed and targeted as a suspect population. It is further supported by new light shed (notably by Şükrü Hanioğlu) on the increasingly strident Social Darwinistic strain in Young Turk thought. It is also supported by large numbers of memoirs, reminiscences or recollections dating from the 1920s and 30s -- when, as I shall later note, denialist ideology did not yet exist, and everybody knew -- and could be un-self-consciously frank about -- what had happened. It is also supported by my own ongoing research into the Turkish literature of the period, where one can find ample evidence of the shaping of an anxious and fearful, and therefore also vindictively murderous nationalism, replete with all the Social Darwinistic justifications for its own malevolence.

Hence, thirdly, the horrors of 1915 also fit into a broader historical pattern. At the end of the day, I am not a lawyer but a historian -- and for historians, frequently it is not an event by and in itself, but the overall context, if any, that that event can be fitted into, and from which it might perhaps derive a further meaning, that becomes important. Descartes and Newton both argued, let us remember, that science should strive to achieve a “complete” explanation of any given phenomenon -- or at least as complete as possible. In terms of modern European history, 1915 fits into a pattern of nationalist, Social Darwinistically fed ideologies of mobilization and violence, and accompanying agendas of national purification ethnic cleansing, extending increasingly harshly from the late 19th century to the 1942-45 Holocaust. With or without the extraneous help of Hitler’s apocryphal words (“Who remembers the Armenians?”), 1915 is indeed such a crucial link in this chain of expansion and escalation that, in its absence, the Holocaust, too, would be much more difficult to understand. In terms of my historical sensibilities and holistic aesthetics, this, too, is crucial.

So then, this was the genocide, and why it was genocide. The next question is what to do about it.\textsuperscript{11}

Who is (was) responsible for what?

My main point here is that today, that is to say more than ninety years after these catastrophic, cataclysmic events, we urgently need to broaden out from a “Turkey vs Armenians” view of the prospects and processes of recognition and reconciliation to a “multiple constituencies” approach. The horrors of 1915 continue to cast a long shadow over, and to affect the political cultures, mentalities and future horizons of, at least three groups of people: (1) the Armenians of Armenia; (2) Armenians of the diaspora; (3) Turks in Turkey and elsewhere. To these,
probably there should also be added (4) Turkish Armenians whose presence and identity has been blurred and muted until very recently, but who in what we might call “the Hrant Dink era” have gradually been emerging into greater visibility and distinctiveness both in Turkey and abroad.

Just by putting things in this way, I must emphasize that consciously, deliberately, I am already diverging from a beaten path. For the way the Armenian question is usually posed entails a simple opposition between Turkey and Armenians, or even between Turks and Armenians, if only by way of a verbal shorthand. I think this is wrong and misleading, the worst aspect of it being the final, hostile counterpositioning of Turks (as Turks) and Armenians (as Armenians). Against this, the proper way to address the question is to begin by making a clear distinction (a) between the Turkish establishment and Turkish civil society, and also another distinction (b) between Turkish nationalism (and nationalists), and Turks in general.

This is because “Turks” in general did not order and carry out the genocide in 1915, and again, “Turks” in general are not primarily and spontaneously responsible for the current production and dissemination of denialism. Let me recapitulate some of the implications of the genocide analysis that I undertook in Part I of this article. The 1915 expulsion and extermination of Ottoman Armenians was conceived and planned by a dictatorial military triumvirate, a non-accountable warlordship rendered “rootless and ruthless”12 by its own social conditions of existence and by its politically abnormal, arrivistic route to power -- an army-party leadership which was also standing at the apex of a similarly rootless and ruthless, and newly nationalistic13, type of military-bureaucratic cadre. Under direct orders from especially Talat, the intellectual mastermind and talented organizer of the triumvirate, the mass expulsion and extermination of Ottoman Armenians was carried out not even by the entirety of this military-bureaucratic cadre, but by its most loyally nationalistic elements, in turn mobilizing the most tribally or criminally organized, the most fanatically xenophobic, anti-Christian, anti-Armenian14, and perhaps also the most materially covetous elements of the local populations of parts of Asia Minor. Many were unenthusiastic, but were coerced or were

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12 I remember introducing this expression at the first (Chicago) conference of Turkish and Armenian historians held in Spring 2000.

13 I should add : nationalism from above, nationalistic from above. For during the “long 19th century” demise of the Ottoman empire, a whole range of proto-nationalistic ideological searches and interim conceptualizations, ranging from experiments with Ottomanism to the Turkism that finally erupted out of the Balkan Wars, mostly originated with the intellectual retinues gathering around the 19th century civilian bureaucrats and then the early 20th century professional soldiers and bureaucrats that actually held power and were fighting both to reform and to save the empire. Kemalism’s post-1923 attempt to partially re-define early (or Unionist) Turkish nationalism was a further stage along the same line of modern state-building and nation-building from above. As a result, whereas, for example, in Greece (with its early 19th century war of independence sprouting from below, from a variety of local resistances), nationalism has become and remained relatively more of a popular ideology, in Turkey, in contrast, with its war of independence led by officers in khaki, nationalism has come into being as more of a state ideology -- and despite recent plebeianizations and state-street alliances, has mostly remained a state ideology to this day.

14 Note that in this approach, religion (Muslims vs Christians) enters into the analysis at a secondary and complementary level. Some of the most horrific levels of cruelty and murderousness displayed during the genocide might not have been possible without a peculiarly faith-embedded de-humanization of the “other” as kafir, gavur or infidel. Moreover, without that faith-embedded de-humanization and demonization, that is to say if it had been only a matter of two different Christian confessions and communities, all the previous decades’ antagonisms (class-hatreds and national hatreds) might not have developed to this level and extent, and therefore also, the resulting crackdown and repression might not have assumed such comprehensively genocidal proportions. Nevertheless, together with all these ethnic-religious interactions and overdeterminations, it was a fundamentally nationalist affair.
otherwise swept into a volcano of violence, while many others were repelled, choosing to stand aloof, perhaps helping save a few Armenians here and there, or in some cases protesting outright.\textsuperscript{15} Then from the 1970s onwards, it was once more by a military-bureaucratic establishment, by a state-class locked into the ideological legacy of that same mostly Unionist nationalism (which had been coopted into and subsumed, reified under a post-Kemalist façade of Atatürkism), that a systematic denialist discourse came to be constructed. Today, such denialist indoctrination continues to emanate from the most authoritarian, militaristic, nationalistic, anti-European and anti-Western elements of the military-bureaucratic complex, which are forcefully imposing it on the rest of Turkish society, including the media, political parties, and even the government. They are, indeed, using and manipulating this discourse to pursue objectives that are not limited to the Armenian question as such. What they are maximally after, is straitjacketing all other public visions, outlooks and discourses, and establishing un-crossable “red lines”, so-called, so as to maintain the whole political system in ideological bondage to the deep state.

It is as part of that blinding, blinkering and straitjacketing attempt, that they are also trying to persuade (or rather, stampede) all the rest of Turkish society into standing in solidarity with the main actors of 1915, the decision-makers and the executors, on the grounds that they were -- Turks. In Turkish nationalist discourse, therefore, Enver, Talat and Cemal, and Bahaddin Şakir, Kuşcubaşı Eşref, Dr Nazım and all others of the TM, and the likes of the sub-governor of Bogazliyan, are divested of all other qualities except their Turkishness; stripped of their dictatorial inclinations, their putschism, their authoritarianism, their extra- legality and non-accountability, their propensity to have their opponents and critics assassinated (including free-thinking journalists), their extreme nationalism tinged with racism and Social Darwinism -- stripped, in other words, of all evidence of a political-ideological outlook that today, with the advantage of hindsight, we might qualify as proto-fascist -- it is as nothing but Turks in the abstract that they are presented to the citizenship of modern Turkey, who are also thereby divested of all distinguishing characteristics, including all their very real ideo-political differences, and purely as Turks are asked to engage in primitive ancestor worship with regard to these other Turks of a bygone generation. So it was precisely against such obfuscation, that back in Fall 2000, I likened the perpetrators of 1915 to the undercover, extra-legal, fascistically motivated deep state agents of the 1990s, such as the Hizbullahin, or those former Grey Wolf types that were accidentally caught in flagrante delicto at Susurluk.\textsuperscript{16} I was trying to tell Turkish society: Look, living in the present, do you identify yourselves with these people simply because they too happen to be Turkish? If not, why should you identify yourselves with their 1915 counterparts? At the time, this was an innovative explanatory strategy, and appears to have had quite an impact -- to judge, among other things, by the amount of nationalist ink and invective that has been spent on trying to neutralize it. But then, might it not be worth the while of the Armenian diaspora (or diasporas), too, to pay a little attention to just this point?

Who stands to gain?

This is crucial, for only if we put things in this way, does it become possible to see, to envisage that Turks and Armenians need not be enemies, but can actually be partners or allies.

\textsuperscript{15} As Taner Akçam’s research has demonstrated again and again, it is indeed their voices of conscience that keep rising to the surface for example during the 1919 court martial -- without which, not even a quintessential monster like the district governor of Bogazliyan (presently in the process of being re-heroized by Turkish neo-nationalists) could have been sentenced and executed.

\textsuperscript{16} See the daily \textit{Radikal}, 9 October 2000.
in efforts to come face to face with both historical and contemporary reality, and to recognize and to exorcise the demons of the genocide. It cannot be emphasized enough that each of the three or four constituencies I have referred to stands to gain, albeit in different ways, from reconciliation through genocide recognition, broadly understood (whether this means the widespread dissemination and acceptance of the historical truth in Turkish civil society, or an Establishment act of recognition, or both).

What are these gains? How can we describe or define them? This could be the subject of a very long discussion in itself, where we would also have to take into account the heterogeneity of the three or four constituencies in question, which are of course divided into different groups, ideologies, partiers, factions or outlooks. Clearly, for example, there are questions among Armenians themselves as to what Armenians really want -- why they demand genocide recognition, and what they hope to obtain through it. Closure pure and simple, and the mental and emotional peace that could come with it? Or perhaps also reparations of some kind? Or even territorial concessions? Let us not be too naive about it; it cannot be denied that there are some Armenian groups, leaderships or individuals that aspire to such reparations or concessions. I have no way of knowing whether they are in the majority or the minority (of just what geography or demography), but at least on this panel, Henry Theriault has already made a statement to that effect. This, of course, presents some very thorny problems. The first and most important is that this, indeed, belongs with, and can only belong with, the sphere of the state. Such demands, in other words, can only be addressed to a state, and by the same token can only be accepted or rejected by a state. Hence, too, especially in their maximal form (involving not private but collective reparations or concessions), they can only be pursued by another state, or at least a state-like “collective will” unit. So this puts us back into that exclusively vertical relationship between Armenia and Turkey (qua nation-state), or between some notion of Armenian diaspora representation and Turkey, which I regard as very narrowly restrictive, and which I have been trying to avoid in the first place. Simply (and mildly) put, it does not allow much room for lateral dialogue between civil society constituencies, does it? In fact, so drastic is it at the moment, that I cannot help wondering whether placing it on the table might not actually reflect an inner desire to put paid to any hopes for lateral dialogue (by people who love the problem, and who do not want to solve it but to continue living with it and by it). Speaking purely as a hypothetical observer of future events, it cannot, of course be ruled out that as a result of unpredictable twists and turns, the internal situations of Turkey and Armenia, and therefore also the power relations between Turkey and Armenia, might evolve so that this becomes possible. But that is precisely the point -- that it can only be a by-product of international power relations in the rather distant and unforeseeable future. In terms of a current project of lateral civil society dialogues, it can serve as a least common denominator for -- precisely nothing.

So let me assume, for the sake of convenience if nothing else, that as a bare minimum, as a least common denominator, many, maybe most diaspora Armenians demand closure through sincere and genuine (not sham) recognition -- and they are certainly entitled to it. At least for the moment that enables me to come back to the third constituency named above, that is to say Turks in Turkey and abroad. They are absolutely critical in this regard, for the Armenian question is first and foremost a Turkish question in some profound sense. It began in Turkey, and if it is ever to end, it will have to end in Turkey. It was exorbiated into genocidal proportions by early Turkish nationalism, and if it is to be meaningfully recognized, it will have to be recognized by contemporary Turks in an act of self-liberation from the shackles of latter-day varieties of that nationalism. What is crucial here is for Turks themselves to come to understand, and for it to be made possible for them to come to understand -- and here I am
jumping ahead a bit: through the help, yes, not just of world public opinion in general but also of Armenians especially in the diaspora, in conveying messages to the effect that such recognition need not entail succumbing to a vindictive, hence punitive conspiracy, and that given such facilitation, they themselves stand not to lose but to win through confronting, understanding and recognizing the historical reality of 1915 for what it was. If this can be done, genocide recognition, and reconciliation and closure through genocide recognition, can be redefined not as a lose-win (i.e. zero sum) game, or, worse, even a lose-lose (negative sum) game, but actually as a win-win (positive sum) game. For Turks do stand to gain enormously. They stand to gain by doing away with the national myths and taboos that serve as the ideological markers of a quasi-military authoritarianism. They stand to gain by relieving themselves of the constant tensions inculcated by a “national security state” that requires a “culture of the enemy” to be able to perpetuate abnormality. They stand to gain by forging a new, open, brave and honest relationship with the world at large. They stand to gain in terms of a real and comprehensive democratization of Turkish society.

**Turkish weakness: relative lack of historical knowledge**

*In the long run*, therefore, working for genocide recognition and for democracy in Turkey are not contradictory. But whether genocide recognition, here and now, can be an *immediate* demand, is something else altogether. It is not going to be easy, basically because each of these constituencies also has its specific strengths and weaknesses. Among other things, they have been separated and isolated from each other, and thereby also come to (or been made to) distrust or suspect each other for far too long. Partly as a result, they have come to embody (a) different levels of historical knowledge and understanding; (b) different political experiences and vocabularies in current time; (c) different assessments of the external and internal dynamics available. These and other factors are all reflected in the present outlook of the diverse intellectual elites that claim to be speaking on their behalf. All in all, we are facing, and trying to cope with, different institutional histories.

Let us begin with Turks or Turkish society. Confronted with the Armenian question, what are its, or their, strengths and weaknesses? The key weakness is very obvious: lack of historical knowledge and understanding. This has not been absolute and immediate; evolving over time, going through various stages, it has had its own relativity and historicity. Neither has it always been the outcome of a fully conscious conspiracy. Many Armenians might believe that denialism arose virtually as soon as the genocide. This is not so. An interesting aspect of late 20th or early 21st century Turkish nationalist denialism is that its spokesmen or proponents are so shallow as to appear to have forgotten all about the Turkish memoirs and media accounts that were published in the 1920s and early 30s. So they frequently engage in speculative gyrations overlooking how easily these can be contradicted by period witnesses. For in Turkey in these first Republican decades, there was no question about whether something enormous had happened to the Armenians. They had been there, and then they were no longer there, and it had all happened within living memory. There could really be no question of rejecting outright the fact of their uprooting, expulsion and demise. Basically, there were two options, and two camps: Had this been good or bad? Mustafa Kemal himself was hostile to the Unionist leadership that had previously marginalized him, and whom he had come to see as dangerous adventurists who with their pro-German sympathies had dragged Turkey into the Great War. He had taken over from this Old Guard, and never forgot that their underlings were trying to undermine and overthrow his own power. He was also pursuing a project of all-out Westernization and reconciliation with Europe. But at the same time, his
power base rested on the former Unionist rank-and-file. They were all around him: his captains, majors, colonels; his adjutants, aide-de camps; his party stalwarts, his governors and sub-governors. His own hands were clean, though not those of many in his new command apparatus. Hence he had to be circumspect, politic, to be able to balance things. So for example he had to distance himself from the 1919 court martial, which after all had taken place under that same Entente Occupation whose defeat underpinned his entire legitimacy; as a result, at one point we have him talking favorably about the “unjustly executed” Bogazliyan sub-governor. But on various other occasions, we also have him condemning the atrocities of 1915, and even referring to them as “a shameful act”, to quote the title of Taner Akçam’s latest book. Others around him could be more open, such as Falih Rıfkı (Atay), who after the great fire of Izmir/Smyrna in September 1922 gave voice to his anger about “why we were doing this to the Greeks or Armenians”, and who also quoted the outburst that Halide Edib directed at him, Falih Rıfkı, for having introduced her to Bahaddin Şakir: “How could you make me shake hands with this murderer?” she vehemently demanded. It is difficult to imagine Falih Rıfkı writing such things without Mustafa Kemal’s approval. So there was a circle of more liberal-democratic minded Kemalists for whom it was emphatically a bad thing, but of course there were also others for whom it was a good thing, a heroic act of patriotic self-defense, argued along the lines that if “we” had not got them, those Armenians were eventually going to get “us”. This bit of law-of-the-jungle Social Darwinism closely echoed Talat’s own words to Halil Bey (the head of the Ottoman parliament, later Halil Menteşe) upon the latter’s return from Berlin a few months after the deportations and massacres had begun; they also became the main line of defense for many of the accused during the 1919 trials, dovetailing into Ziya Gökalp’s aphorism about how “it was not a case of we massacring them; rather, both sides fought and massacred each other.” Nevertheless, even alongside such brazen defiance (including Halil Menteşe’s memoirs), as well as in other works of sober reporting, such as Ahmed Refik’s testimony on the plight of the Armenian deportees that he observed in transition to the unknown, one can find ample evidence about what actually happened. These are not hidden archival documents that we are talking about; they are narrative sources that are easily available in any library if not bookshop.

After the infighting and the purges of the 1920s, however, as the new régime not only consolidated itself, but also, under the impact of the Great Depression, became more rigidly and autarkically statist in the 1930s; furthermore with all the great powers courting Ankara, and with Armenia in particular controlled by the Soviet Union, and also with the various new Armenian diasporas created all over the world still not very effective in making their voices heard -- under these conditions, it seemed safe for the Turkish establishment to allow the nightmare of 1915 to recede further and further back into the fogs of time. In Murat Belge’s words, inside Turkey itself “the production of knowledge” on the cataclysm was gradually abandoned, resulting in decades of induced forgetting, of collective amnesia (think of what Americans might know and remember of Hiroshima by 2045, for example, if for the next 38 years nothing more were to be written about it in textbooks or the media). Such silence was also reinforced by a sense of the state carefully watching over as yet not very sharply etched “red lines”, though such guardianship was not very explicit. But elsewhere, of course, such

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17 In a recent (November 2006) interview published in the daily Radikal, my Sabancı University colleague, Professor Cemil Koçak, has drawn a wonderful portrait of Ataturk as a political master-tactician operating within all these constraints. In the same breadth, Koçak also warns against trying to over-theorize and over-homogenize this supremely politic Ataturk.

18 At the Istanbul “Ottoman Armenians” conference of September 2005 (publication forthcoming), there was a wealth of such materials and analyses in papers submitted by Hülya Adak, Erol Köroğlu, Ahmet Kuyuș, and Ayhan Aktar.
production of knowledge continued apace, not only accelerating but also (with Lemkin’s and others’ contributions) coming to be more radically re-conceptualized in time, thus giving rise to an impressive (though perhaps uneven) body of genocide literature. Thus it was that from the 1930s to the 1970s, there arose a growing, eventually immense discrepancy between what the world knew about the Armenian genocide, and what was “known” (or was allowed to be known and said) inside Turkey.19

It was on top of this, then, that the ASALA attacks on Turkish diplomats came from the 1970s onwards -- partly under one military dictatorship or the other, or just as the country was moving from the Nationalist Front coalition governments of Süleyman Demirel (with strong backing by, and therefore also protection for, the MHP’s Grey Wolves) to Kenan Evren’s 12th September 1980 régime. It was a disastrous combination. After decades of ignorance or misinformation, the military had a field day with the indignation that rose inside Turkey against these bombings and assassinations. This was the time of the creation of a truly systematic denialist discourse about “baseless slanders” and “the fabrications of Armenian propaganda”, curtly imposing it upon an already considerably muffled and intimidated media, and through it upon all of public space. From the 1990s into the first decade of the 21st century, this was followed up by the instalment of a comprehensive network of the ideological apparatuses of the new national security state, including new school curricula or teaching packs imposed on the National Education Ministry from the outside, as well as various schemes of cooperation between YÖK (the Board of Higher Education), TTK (the Turkish Historical Society, which under Yusuf Halaçoğlu has increasingly had less and less to do with scholarship and more and more to do with propaganda), and ASAM (the Center for Eurasian Strategic Studies, a hard nationalist, right-wing, privately endowed Ankara think-tank). From 2000 on, it is from around or within this triangle that materials appear to have been originating for smear campaigns and intimidation campaigns launched against dissident scholars and intellectuals in the media (including the internet), and with more than a whiff of masterminding by some Psychological Warfare Department hanging over the whole affair.

The final stage of denialism is a historical moment of inertia or autonomy. When Hamlet and Ophelia are watching “the play within the play”, at one point “Methinks the lady doth protest too much,” says Ophelia. The Turkish nationalist deep state, too, has “protested too much.” That is to say, it has resorted to anything and everything, regardless of consistency, to counter “Armenian allegations.” All such bits and pieces of “refutation”, produced mostly for domestic consumption but internationally worthless (in the face of world knowledge), have now turned into a cage imprisoning -- Turkish policy. “After having denied it for so long, how can we now turn around and tell the Turkish public that, er, you know, it did happen ?” In

19 During the 31st March panel, faced with my attempted explanations about this information gap and the resulting need for the Turkish public to be progressively educated about the genocide, Henry Theriault made a show of great incredulity, arguing, in effect, that a genocide is a genocide and that everybody knows what it is; to bolster his point, he picked up a microphone, turning it over and showing it to audience, remarking : It is a microphone, everybody knows what it is, there is no need to debate what it is, or whether we should think of not calling it a microphone at the outset. Very poor simile. Let me try a better one. (a) Even in a country where microphones are used all the time, you would still have to teach children something about electricity and electromagnetism, as well as about the inner parts of a microphone, in order to get them not just to memorize that it is called a microphone but to understand how a microphone works. (b) In a country where somehow all teaching about electricity and electromagnetism has been prohibited, and furthermore the public has been brought up on posters showing microphones but saying “beware : these are shrapnel bombs”, you would have to be considerably more sophisticated than saying “a microphone is a microphone” in order to persuade anybody into using them. (c) As a socio-historical phenomenon, a genocide is incomparably more complicated than a microphone, and much more difficult to teach about under the best of circumstances. That much, surely even a philosopher should understand.
domestic politics, that has become an immeasurable liability. It is as if, in war, one side had started to dig what it regarded as a defensive trench -- and then dug so far and deep that it ended up having dug itself into a hole that it cannot get out of. It has become a habitus, a mental prison, an end in itself. Having lost all defensive value, it still cannot be abandoned.

Turkish strengths: size and heterogeneity; traditions of political dissent and critical scholarship

But so, these are the tools with which an increasingly anxious and wrathful deep state has been trying to spread disinformation, to bludgeon dissenting voices back into line, and to restore its weakening, eroding monopoly over public space -- though not always to any great avail. For at the same time, there is a significant degree of strength and resilience in Turkish civil society, though this is not always obvious from the outside. First, there is the matter of sheer size, which tends to go hand in hand with heterogeneity. Turkey is much bigger than, for example, Armenia, and therefore also with a much higher level of internal differentiation, and not just in terms of regional development or its wealth and income distribution corollaries. Turkish society is also much more explicitly, vocally, self-consciously divided into a wide range of educational backgrounds, ideological outlooks, sub-cultures and political preferences. Furthermore, all these find expression in a huge media sector that is of course under pressure to conform to the “national line” but nevertheless stands closer to the freedom end than to the dictatorship end of the scale -- a media that comprises large numbers of newspapers, radios and television channels.

By that token, Turkey is, and Turks are, also that much more difficult to control, and to impose unity and uniformity upon. For example, part and parcel of that heterogeneity are traditions of critical Left-opposition that are deeply suspicious of the deep state. The intelligentsia still remembers even distant acts of duplicity or arbitrary high-handedness -- such as, in 1938-39, the trumped-up charges of fomenting revolt within the army and navy colleges that led to Nazım Hikmet’s imprisonment for nearly two decades (and the Kafkaesque military tribunal that handed down an already decided sentence); during the transitional 1945-50 phase, the novelist Sabahattin Ali’s mysterious murder, as well as the mobilization of right-wing rabble to destroy the offices and the printing presses of the independent daily Tan; then a further nationalist mobilization to carry out the 6-7 September 1955 pogrom against the remaining Greeks (and other non-Muslim minorities) of especially Istanbul and Izmir.20 Closer to home, tens (perhaps even a few hundreds) of thousands of

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20 These attacks, which resulted in the wanton destruction of some thousands of businesses, shops and other workplaces as well as many residences belonging to Greek and some other non-Muslim citizens of Turkey by rampaging mobs now known to have been expressly brought into Istanbul from the outside by group leaders receiving their instructions from the military-intelligence establishment, constitute the biggest single act of premeditated mass violence against non-Turkish, non-Muslim populations in the Republican era -- and therefore also the closest thing in that Republican era to the Armenian horrors of 1915. In fact, for critical, dissenting intellectuals, scholars, and journalists of personal worth, the two have always been strongly (and rightly) connected. It is therefore all the more significant that in September 2005, that is to say on the 50th anniversary of the pogrom, it should have been commemorated, indeed mourned, by most mainstream national dailies as “a black blot on the history of the Republic”, that it should have been exposed, analyzed, taken apart in great detail -- and that very few voices should have emerged to defend it. All this happened in early September 2005, i.e. just weeks before the “Ottoman Armenians” conference. It was a great liberating moment in the public sphere, and it was as if the honest media were saying to the conference organizers: We understand what you are doing, for we do know what happened in history, but for the moment we can only say it by proxy, vis-à-vis 1955, and directly vis-à-vis 1915 (my interpretation). That is very significant. In fact, it is perhaps the most important signal that a comparable act of conscience will also eventually take place with respect to the Armenian genocide. Provided, of
young people who went through torture and harsh prison conditions under the 12th March 1971 or 12th September 1980 army coups and régimes are now in their forties or fifties, and very far from forgetting. Also inscribed in their collective memory are numerous other provocations that paved the way from the first to the second of these military takeovers, such as the 1977 May Day massacre, or an attempt to assassinate the late Bulent Ecevit during that year’s election campaign, or the mysterious bombing and sinking of a moored liner in the Golden Horn and the equally mysterious fire that ravaged Istanbul’s main opera house -- all perpetrated by the same dark forces that then blamed “communists” or “terrorists.” People also know how brutal Diyarbakır prison was already in the 1970s and then just how much more indescribably savage it became for its Kurdish detainees in the 1980s (and how this then turned into a breeding ground for the PKK). They know about the comprehensive post-1974 infiltration of the extreme right into the police and other security forces (as demonstrated for the whole world to see by videos of Hrant Dink’s murderer being congratulated by those who had taken him into custody). As a result, there is a profound revulsion built into non-negligible sections of Turkish society -- not just against such acts of oppression, repression or provocation, but also against all the attendant hypocrisy, the Orwellian double-talk, the facile lies and the disinformation statements perpetually dished out by the military-bureaucratic complex. Who were the huge crowds of Istanbulites, estimated at anywhere from 100,000 to 200,000, that turned out to mourn Hrant Dink, striking fear into the establishment simply by marching in silence behind the slogan “We are all Armenians”? The simple answer is that they were (are) people “taught by need and sorrow”, as Bertold Brecht would have it -- people for whom all of the above has been their life-experience.

A third point is that this tradition of dissent, which is not to be underestimated in itself, goes further and deeper insofar as it is not confined to streets and public squares, nor to political rallies and protest marches, but has also come to inspire, to be embodied in, and to receive permanence and paradigmatic status from, a new critical scholarship. Like everything else, myths arising from revolutions and nation-states also have their radioactive half-life. There is an early phase in which the revolution maintains immense momentum and prestige, and its self-narration, persuading everybody to embrace a black-and-white contrast between the old and the new order. Gradually, however, even that new régime ages, the public mobilization subsides, rituals of enthusiasm become shop-worn, while the costs of making revolution begin to emerge, including not only the casualties but also the structural legacies, on which new generations of cool and sober scholarship start to concentrate. In Turkey, this kind of sea-change has been taking place since the 1970s, when it became precisely the 12th March and 12th September crackdowns, in the name of Ataturkism (or Ataturkist Bonapartism), on a Left that had hitherto imagined itself to represent the true revolutionary legacy of Ataturkism, that launched successive generations of then-young students and scholars on the way to re-examining that imagined relationship. Today, many of them are amongst Turkey’s foremost historians and social scientists. Yes, the 12th September 1980 military régime in particular has also created numbers of very docile state universities, especially in the provinces, that are more “state” than “university”, and which adhere to the military-bureaucratic state center in pretty much the same way that German universities adhered to the Bismarckian state in the 1870s and 80s, or the only two Turkish state universities that then existed adhered to the Kemalist state in the 1930s. Yes, over the last two or three years, we have also witnessed some (literally) in-credible public gestures from some of these university administrations that have nothing to do with their educational raison d’être, such as declarations of support for Denktashite die-hardism in Cyprus, or against any AKP leader’s presidential candidacy, and course, that those on the side of the historical truth know or learn how to address Turkish society without pushing Turks back in fearful defensiveness into the arms of an authoritarian-nationalist establishment.
even a single act of banning all French courses in response to the extension of the “Loi Gayssot” to cover the Armenian genocide. But at the same time, abroad as well as inside Turkey, in other and more serious institutions of higher knowledge that serve as safe havens for academic freedom, driven by disenchantment with official ideology, and benefiting from both Turkey’s size and degree of openness to the outside world (which enable good scholars to break out of parochialism and connect with the mainstream of their respective disciplines as universally practised), there flourishes a new sociology, a new anthropology, a new political science, and of course a new history of an increasingly high caliber. In particular, more and more historians (as well as other social scientists working with a historical approach) have been producing rising numbers of excellent books and articles subjecting virtually every link of the old triumphalist narrative of a “perfect” revolution to intense scrutiny. In effect, on the 19th century (comprising the Tanzimat and the Hamidian eras) and the first half of the 20th century (comprising the Young Turks and Kemalist revolutions), a comprehensively non-statist, non-nationalist New History has arisen in Turkey and the Turkish diaspora over the last thirty years or more -- as evidenced only partially by the list of participants in the “Ottoman Armenians” conference of September 2005. To put it in another way, the scholarly recognition of the historical realities of 1915 has come about not just because of a civic reaction against an atmosphere of stifling hypocrisy, but also as a by-product of this entire historiographical development. Simply put, serious Turkish scholars have made major strides in both deconstructing Turkish nationalism and developing empathic insights into its significant “others”, ultimately finding their way into the Armenian case. It is not for me to ask whether my generation’s and then succeeding generations’ critical re-examination of Turkish nationalist mythology has any counterpart, in terms of scope, emotional intensity and intellectual sophistication, in Armenian and Armenian diaspora scholars’ critical engagement with their “own” -- that is to say Armenian -- statism or nationalism.

Turkish strengths: the rise of a pro-European Islam

Last but not least, there is the enormous fact of the current divide in Turkish politics to consider. The same process of disenchantment with the authoritarian outlook and implications of post-Kemalist Ataturkism, or with the seeming impossibility of democratising that outlook, that has led to a scholarly enterprise of desacralisation, has also called forth a political project of seeking representation for Islam and Islamists in the public sphere. After ups and downs involving electoral successes, party bannings and re-formations from the 1960s to the present, over the last decade this drive has produced the present AKP government, resting on a nearly two-thirds majority in parliament, and frequently described as embodying a marriage of moderate Islam with conservative modernism. But why should that be at all relevant to our present subject? I am aware that from the outside, and especially from a diaspora vantage point, at first sight the entire Turkish establishment might appear monolithic when it comes to the Armenian question. Are they not all opposed to genocide recognition “here and now”? In the face of HR 106, has it not been Abdullah Gül as the AKP Foreign Minister who has responded with a Washington Times guest editorial that looks like

21 During some informal discussions after the conclusion of the 31st March panel, there seemed to be a certain degree of incredulity amongst some members of the (mostly American-Armenian) audience that it might be possible to teach honestly about Turkish nationalism, and in that context also about 1915, in any Turkish academic environment.

22 In a trenchant interview that I have already referred to, Prof. Cemil Koçak may have been the first major historian and observer of contemporary Turkey to state clearly that full and genuine democracy is impossible on an Ataturkist ideological basis.
nothing but a delaying exercise? At the end of the day, aren’t they all denialists of some kind or other?

During the 31st March panel, too, such questions inevitably arose, and all I can do here is to summarize some of my answers in general form. Once more, outside appearances (of homogeneity) can be very deceptive, leading to quick and easy errors. There was a 19th and early 20th century moment in Ottoman-Turkish history when secular nationalists (or Turkists) were modernists, whereas Islamists were more anti-modern. As the inheritor of a Young Turk and Kemalist mantle, the CHP as the founding party of the Republic long persisted in combining nationalism with the universalizing implications of modernity. Especially after its 1950 move from power to opposition, over the last half-century it was to the CHP that the public kept turning for defense of human rights, against torture and political executions, for social democratic alignments with Europe against military régimes, or in the quest for a less conflictual foreign policy.

But all this has changed, drastically and comprehensively, over the last decade. It is as if, in the persons of the AKP’s Erdoğan-Gül leadership and the CHP’s Baykal-Öymen-Elekdağ leadership, the secular Ataturkists and the moderate Islamists have switched places, moving to opposite sides of modernity’s universalization project. It is the AKP government that, especially over 2003-2004, has moved exceptionally rapidly to fulfill the Copenhagen criteria through a series of legal-institutional reforms (though practice has lagged behind legislation). Against this, it is the CHP that has positioned itself as the champion not of Europeanism but of nationalism, choosing to oppose and attack the AKP not over “too little” but over “too much” Europeanization. In the process, the CHP has virtually abandoned the modernity leg of its traditional platform. Specifically with regard to all the most critical issues of Cyprus, the Kurdish question, and, yes, the Armenian question, the CHP (with two retired, hawkish senior diplomats in ominously key positions) has repeatedly aligned itself with deep state intransigence, raising a hue and cry about “sellout” or “betrayal” in attempts, together with President Sezer and the entire military-bureaucratic complex, to blackmail the AKP into abandoning all impasse-breaking initiatives.

In contrast, on all these points the AKP leadership has always given signs of wanting to liberate itself at least partially from the shackles of official ideology and the quasi-military “national security” line. This was most marked in their first two years in power, when they had caught everybody by surprise, and the deep state had not had time to organize a concerted reaction. For example, this was when they were emitting their strongest signals about a peaceful solution in Cyprus. This was also when they were refraining from saying anything on the Armenian question that was a repetition of the old rhetoric. They were obviously trying to avoid being dragged back into toeing the traditional state-line, and to reserve for themselves a certain room for maneuver. At one point, Tayyip Erdoğan went so far as to say that he was not fully familiar with the historical realities of this sad or tragic period, eliciting an uproar from unofficial media spokesmen for the deep state, who promptly started warning him and his Foreign Minister not to stray from the fold.23 Subsequently, the CHP leadership moved in parliament, under a plan hatched by Şükrü Elekdag, to lay siege to the AKP, to lock it into a non-partisan national coalition mentality, and thus to prevent it from achieving any significant breakthrough on the Armenian question. By the way, this was when the AKP leadership came up with a proposal to establish a bilateral commission of Turkish and Armenian historians to investigate the events of 1915. This has been only reviled by most vocal Armenians, who, I

23 What do you mean you do not know? Of course you know as we all know. We all know that this is nothing but a bunch of baseless slanders -- wrote Emin Çolaşan.
think, have not perceived the possibility that the AKP might have been trying to create an escape clause for itself -- to formulate and retain, in the face of deep state encirclement, at least one dialogue avenue, however narrow, maybe in the hope that in better times it might be enlarged and improved upon. Interestingly, through many tense months in 2005, both Erdoğan and Gül also repeatedly deplored the various efforts to obstruct or ban the “Ottoman Armenians” conference, speaking up again and again in defense of academic freedom. Eventually this even led to Abdullah Gül sending a key “good wishes” message, as moderate as possible, to the opening session of the conference. The Erdoğan-Gül duo’s approach to the Hrant Dink murder, too, has been distinctively different from that of the state establishment as well of the nationalist media. Erdoğan went in person to offer his condolences to Mrs Dink (has any other major party leader done so ?), and also spoke favorably of the massive funeral, undertaking only mild and restrained criticism of its central slogan (“We are all Armenians”).

Finally, this recent editorial by Abdullah Gül in the Washington Times also merits a careful reading. Halfway down, the Turkish Foreign Minister (now waiting to become president) specifies what he is objecting to: “With regard to the Armenian allegation describing the tragedy that befell them as genocide, the question, from the point of view of international law, is whether the Ottoman government systematically pursued a calculated act of state policy....” Otherwise put, at least here he limits himself not to a historical but to an entirely legal/istic position -- while also admitting that it was a “tragedy that befell them [the Armenians].”

Do not dismiss this out of hand, for in terms of Turkish realities this is neither Elekdağ nor four-star language. Simultaneously, Mr Gül also opens the door, for the very first time, not to a purely bilateral but now a multilateral historians’ commission. He says: “I hereby extend an invitation to any third country, including the United States, to contribute to this commission by appointing scholars....” Furthermore, this offer has now been repeated in the 24th April paid advertisement placed by the Turkish embassy in the New York Times. Do not dismiss this, too, out of hand: This is tantamount to a promise that Turkey would abide by the findings of any such international history commission. Back in October 2005, soon after the Istanbul “Ottoman Armenians” conference, I myself said something similar in Yerevan when I was attending a NATO Rose-Roth seminar. As repeated in the lengthy interview that Khatchig Mouradian then did with me (for his Beirut paper), I was looking for and suggesting ways to transform a bilateral commission that could be stacked with state-appointed lawyer-historians into a more multilateral one. I was suggesting that Armenia could pick up this challenge and respond with a broadening counter-proposal. At the time, I was attacked by nationalist parliamentarians and columnists for such suggestions “to the enemy”. A year or more later, suddenly, we have Abdullah Gül accepting and inviting multilateralization. Is this or is this not a new departure? Could this be the enlargement of an initially narrow escape clause that I was referring to above? Depends on who makes what use of it. Wouldn’t it be nice if the US, the UK, France, Italy, Germany or Holland were to say yes -- and to nominate some of these countries’ greatest experts on 1915 to this commission? Do Armenians have any reason to fear the outcome? I do not; I have laid out my analysis of the 1915 genocide; I am willing to submit it to the scrutiny of any group of knowledgeable and critical historians; I believe there is enough evidence to persuade any genuinely international, multilateral, objective counterpart of South Africa’s Truth Commission(s). A lot would depend, of course, on the compositional and procedural rules to be adopted. But Mr Gül and the New York Times ad do not say anything about Turkey vetoing third country appointees. And of course, all that would be taking place under the watchful eye of the international public. Frankly, I do not see how all such weights and safeguards could be easily tricked or manipulated.24

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24 Why, then, is the Turkish government taking this risk? Could it be that, seeing no other way out of the hole into which deep state denialism has dug Turkey over the last forty years, they actually want to externalize and
But I do not want to belabor this point. My main argument here is not about the pros and cons of a historians’ commission, however defined. It is about the distinction between “state” and “government” in Turkey, about how a vein and party of moderate Islam has ended up as much more pro-European than the Ataturkist establishment, and also about how it is likely to continue in that way -- not least because it perceives European democracy as necessary for its own chances of survival. It is also about the potential that is thereby implied for historical recognition and reconciliation. Provided, of course, that especially diaspora Armenians learn to read, understand, and act upon such signs of Turkish developments.

Armenian strengths and weaknesses

This brings me to my last chapter: about the strengths and weaknesses of my second constituency, that is to say Armenians of the diaspora, and even more specifically American Armenians. The way I see it, what are their -- your -- strengths and weaknesses? In dealing with Turkish civil society, I first addressed the weakness and then the strengths. Here, however, I am going to do it the other way round: first the strengths and then the weaknesses, because it is not with platitudes but with a critique that I want to conclude.

With regard to our common problem, the main source of strength for Armenia and diaspora Armenians is very basic: It is their immense historical knowledge, resting on their life-experience. Simply put, they (you) know what happened over 1915-16 better than anybody else -- through personal and family memories; through piles of archival and other documentary wealth; through innumerable publications. I do not mean that this whole body of genocide scholarship is above criticism. Some of it has too narrow a focus on just Armenian “national history” (in the tradition of 19th century German historiography). A lot of self-particularization creeps in, as well as an essentialistic approach to your “other(s)”. There is not enough critical analysis of the aims, programs or practices of Armenian nationalism in history, leading in some cases to a total identification with the Armenian actors of the late 19th and early 20th century, to the point of eliminating the distance between now and then, and coming to see things entirely through their eyes (whereas one would expect modern historical methodology to be more distanced). At the same time, too much is ascribed to “Islamic fanaticism”, or else too much criminal intent and design is ascribed to the Young Turks from the outset, who are frequently regarded as rabid nationalists already in 1908, only practising dissimulation in order to realize their evil plans under favorable circumstances. This quasi-Hegelian vision of an inevitable “unfolding” allows too little scope for the accidentalities of history (and is unfortunately a common failing of many Balkan nationalist historiographies, too, as well as Turkish nationalist historiography). But in the end, the historical knowledge accumulated and put at the disposal of the whole world through decades of work by Armenian genocide scholars is both quantitatively and qualitatively immense. There is no way that this can be rendered null and void by any talk about “baseless Armenian propaganda.” If knowledge, science, scholarship count for anything in this world, it is the ultimate guarantee that in the long run, it is denialism that will have to give way. For the sake of sanity and democracy in my own country, I do hope that more and more of Turkish society, internationalize the political responsibility for recognition? The reforming Tanzimat pashas of the 19th century were famous for both grumbling against Great Power demands as “interference in our internal affairs”, but also using them to persuade the sultan of the necessity for reform. On the EU road, it has become common for contemporary reformers to justify everything by the need to satisfy the Copenhagen criteria. Could something similar be happening here, in Abdullah Gül’s WT editorial and then the NYT ad? In politics and diplomacy, stranger things have happened.
eventually Turkish parties and politicians, and ultimately Turkish governance, also come to realize this.

But to that end, what is more serious is that most present-day diaspora Armenians do not know or understand Turkey, as a result of which they do not know what to make of and how to talk with contemporary Turks. This includes the Turkish Left-dissidents and the new generation of critical Turkish scholarship that I have mentioned; most of you do not know what to make of and how to talk with even these “new Turks”. Look, here in this auditorium at Harvard, on 31st March 2007, or here now in these sentences that I am writing to be published and read, I am keenly aware that many of you do not know what to make of and how to talk to me or with me (other than to tell us/me that we are “very brave”, or else to suspect and challenge us/me as possibly yet another Fifth Column sent to disrupt Armenian unity). Between such extremes of hostile doubts and platitudes, it is as yet very rare for us to be able to talk as individuals, in our personal voices, trading knowledge and analysis, forgetting that one of us happens to be a Turk and the other happens to be an Armenian.

More broadly put, what many diaspora Armenians and Armenian leaderships do not have is the up-to-date political experience and expertise to deal properly with the emergence into human form of this new, dynamic, non-monolithic, non-homogenous Turkey that with all its oppositional intellectuals and critical scholars, its pro-European business community and reforming moderate Islamists, is going through such a vital struggle for democracy. I think this is mostly because Armenians have been closed off (and have closed themselves off) for far too long; they have tended to perceive Turkey as “one big enemy”, against which they have come to hold on to “one big fact” (of the genocide as the most common identity denominator), pursued through a certain notion of genocide recognition as “one big policy”. There is a lot in this that is very understandable. Confronting intransigence can be a hard (and hardening) experience. Such stubborn denialism in the face of the truth can drive the whole world to sheer exasperation -- and to a desire to batter down that resistance through forceful means, whatever the cost. Of course, it is very possible for such methods to turn counter-productive. It was in Yerevan that I first told an anecdote about coming home one day to find that my child had “experimented” with mixing cough medicine and other kitchen ingredients into a foul-smelling brew which she had then abandoned on the counter. When asked, although there was nobody else around, she unthinkingly said “No, I didn’t do it” -- and then just could not get out of the trap of sticking by that first statement, however ludicrous that might be in the face of all the evidence. After a huge blowup, and then after hours of calming down and making peace, admission came only in the course of a return to normal conversation.

The parallel here is that in their reactiveness to denialism, many Armenian leaderships appear to have locked themselves into a single strategy of forcing recognition on Turkey through external, international pressure. A discourse about how “Armenians are the eternal victims in the face of an eternal Turkish dominance” (here exemplified by Henry Theriault), revolving around both self-pity and a false belief in the inescapable tyranny of history, helps sustain the conviction that there is no other recourse. For Armenians, one consequence has been a certain lack of political sophistication and flexibility, reflected by an increasingly stunted, simplistic vocabulary reduced to three words; genocide, recognition, denial. The genocide is the genocide; it is self-evident; it cannot be discussed. Recognition is to recognize that it was genocide. Anything that falls the slightest bit short of that is denial. Such “falling short” can take various forms, only the most obvious being failure to use the g-word, however complete the description and however sincere the interlocutor might otherwise be. But as I have found
out, even if you say it was genocide, any critique of Armenian nationalism, past or present, or for that matter any critique of any other aspect of Armenian culture or institutions, or any disagreement with any dimension of an Armenian interpretation or statement about history, regardless of whether it is factually grounded or not, can result in aspersions of denialism if you happen to be Turkish. There seems to be a profound psychological, spiritual dichotomization underlying that. It may have to do with the most absolutely maximalist definition of denialism possible: any contravention of a belief in all Turks (or Turkishness) as wrong or bad at all times, and in all Armenians (or Armenicity) as right, good and virtuous at all times.

Hrant Dink’s fourth constituency:
The promise held out by Turkish Armenians

Leave aside how excessively harsh or unjust you may perceive me to have been in these or other critical assessments. Is it possible to arrive at a common acceptance of these or other mutual strengths and weaknesses, and then also at a common road-map for the future? In particular, without mincing any words about the backwardness of many Turks’ historical knowledge or understanding, is it also possible to engage in a constructive critique of the type of “genocide recognition politics” presently pursued by many Armenian groups (which almost invariably revolve around a Turkish-state-vs-Armenians axis), in favor of prioritizing a more horizontal or lateral, more civil society, more Turks-and-Armenians-together type of education, information and consciousness-raising approach to fostering inter-communal, inter-constituency conversations?

Now and in the future, I would hope, for example, that it becomes possible to talk intelligently not only about (the real contents and meaning of) Turkish nationalist denialism, but also about

1) why and how is it that “genocide” remains primarily a lawyer’s as against a historian’s word or concept, overloaded with forcefully legal-criminal implications;

2) how, therefore, if it is pushed too much or over-utilized, it turns into a cliché or buzz-word that becomes a substitute for, and actually ends up masking, a concrete, on-hands type of historical understanding (such as I have tried to provide in Part I of this article);

3) how such pushing or over-utilization is also very capable of stimulating (and simulating) a courtroom atmosphere, a juridical process bound to end in a verdict and a sentencing, which seems to make many Armenians feel like self-righteous prosecutors, with the further corollary that most Turks start feeling as if they are (or Turkishness in general is) on trial, and that a “collective guilt” verdict is inevitable;

4) how, especially in the absence of adequate time and space for re-educating Turkish civil society, this threatens to drive most Turks or Turkish groups not only into over-defensiveness but even into the arms of a denialist deep state (as perhaps evidenced by what has been happening to many Turkish communities in the USA especially over the past decade);

5) how this effect is further reinforced by the very strict, indeed maximalist definitions of denial/ism that go hand in hand with single-minded pursuit of such “genocide recognition politics” (as a result of which, huge grey zones of Turkish civil
society may be aprioristically written off as “enemies” instead of being recognized as normal people who stand to benefit from truth and reconciliation)\textsuperscript{25};

(6) how a still further effect is to render Turkish politics needlessly opaque, since one starts looking at all parties, forces or dynamics according to the single criterion of (direct and immediate) recognition versus shades and hues of denial, making all the various detailed analyses undertaken in this paper virtually impossible\textsuperscript{26};

(7) why and how is it that therefore, all such multiplying and concatenating effects do not weaken but actually facilitate “genocide denial politics” as practised by the deep state, which vastly prefers to have the question reduced to one of “was it genocide or not ?” (as evidenced by all the deliberately obfuscating psychological warfare carried out back in 2005 to persuade the public that what was going to be done at the “Ottoman Armenians” conference was to discuss and then pass a resolution recognizing 1915 as genocide -- though that was emphatically not part of the conference agenda);

(8) why and how is it that in the end, it also has the effect of making it that much more difficult (or dangerous) to work for recognition and reconciliation inside Turkey (though I would not regard this as a primary consideration).

Now. As a Turk, meaning a fully Turkish Turk, am I also suspect for saying all this outright, and laying it on the table ? Could it be that I, too, am trying to divert the Armenian diaspora from proper pursuit of its “national cause” ? In other words, could all this, too, be yet another gimmick or smokescreen to delay genocide recognition by the US Congress and Senate, and then also the (next) Administration ? Given a past history of decades of isolation between my first and second constituencies, on the one hand, and the third constituency on the other, such doubts, too, are not that difficult to comprehend.

Though they have to be surpassed at some point. And a key role in surpassing them is very likely to devolve on Turkish Armenians, that fourth constituency awakening and activating which may have been Hrant Dink’s greatest historical contribution. Hrant himself was \textit{sui generis} in a peculiar way. Since 19th January 2007, he has frequently been described as “an ethnic Armenian and a Turkish citizen.” This does not do full justice to the extent to which he was a \textit{mestizo}, a product of \textit{métissage} or hybridity in the anthropological sense. For (citizenship aside) he was also ethno-culturally, linguistically, emotionally and intellectually both Turkish and Armenian. Consequently “his people” were not just Armenians but also Turks, or perhaps not just Turkish Armenians (and Armenian Armenians, and diaspora Armenians) but also Turkish Turks. It was precisely because of such internalized, naturalized hybridity that he had (or developed) that extraordinary gift of his to understand, deal with, inspire confidence in, and translate between all “sides” to our common, connected, tragic history.

\textsuperscript{25} Crucial here is whether to opt for a legal, textbook definition of “denialism” or a working, on-hands, situationist understanding of the mental-emotional core of denial.

\textsuperscript{26} Consider, for example, what I have already said regarding Abdullah Gül’s recent \textit{WT} editorial, and the \textit{NYT} ad that has followed. Here is fertile ground for rethinking a more nuanced, flexible road map. If this option were to be taken, maybe five years from now Gül’s editorial might be seen as having constituted a new demarche. On the other hand, if this option is not taken because of a belief that it is nothing but a gimmick or a smokescreen for enduring denialism, of course nothing will have come of it, and in the end the gimmick or smokescreen verdict will in a sense have been “proven”.
Was this why he was killed? I tend to think not -- not in my model of an ideologically “deep state”-inspired, but organizationally and operationally not centrally commanded, therefore autocephalous network of provincial neo-nationalist vigilantes. I cannot see that orders were relayed from high up all the way down to Ogün Samast to get Hrant because in fact he was identified as “the most dangerous of all.” Instead, I tend to see him as marked out through the web of Article 301 prosecutions that enveloped him simply as an active, vocal Armenian.

But intentionally or not, it is in fact the most uniquely irreplaceable, irreproducible unifier of an entire new resurgence that has been removed -- that we have lost -- through this murder. Now it is up to his fourth constituency to try and fill that vacuum.