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# **ARMENOLOGICAL ISSUES**

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## About us

**The Journal of Armenological Issues** is sponsored by the Institute for Armenian Studies at Yerevan State University.

*The Institute for Armenian Studies, Yerevan State University (IAS, YSU)* is an Armenian state research Institute and think tank. The predecessor of the Institute for Armenian Studies was the Center for Armenian Studies, established in 1968. The IAS was established in July 2008 by the decision of the Academic Council of YSU.

Since 2023, the scope of scientific and expert research of YSU Institute for Armenian Studies has been significantly expanded, and the toolkit of research methods and skills has been enriched and modernized. Retrognostic, diagnostic, and prognostic studies are now being performed at IAS.

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The Journal, with its new format, aims to promote and foster an ongoing dialogue between scholars from Armenia and other countries, the expression of differing world views and beliefs, and evaluations of new methodologies.

The Journal of Armenological Issues is a vibrant, lively periodical hosting continuing discussions on identity and memory, state and diaspora, relationships between gender, ethnicity and nationalism, and Middle Eastern politics and society.

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## THE GERMAN REICHSTAG, KARL LIEBKNECHT AND THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE DURING WORLD WAR I<sup>1</sup>

Bernd Braun\*

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### Abstract

It is a side effect of all wars that objective reporting on events relevant to the war is prevented by state censorship. Propaganda takes the place of truth - as was the case in Germany during World War I. How was it still possible for the German public to learn about the Armenian Genocide? In German and Armenian historiography, this merit is attributed to Pastor Johannes Lepsius. But a few months before Lepsius published his enlightening book, the Social Democratic member of the Reichstag Karl Liebknecht had already pointed out the mass murders of Armenians in the Reichstag on 11 January 1916. He was the only one of 397 members of parliament to publicise this crime against humanity. The SPD's central organ "Vorwärts" printed the Reichstag debates so that hundreds of thousands of Germans could read them. This courageous action by Karl Liebknecht has not yet been adequately recognized.

**Keywords:** *Armenian Genocide, Scrutiny in Germany, German Reichstag, Karl Liebknecht.*

### General introduction

As is well known, the Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of Bulgaria were among the allies of the two central European empires of Germany and Austria-Hungary during World War I. Numerous German diplomats, military officers, senior officials and politicians were informed about the Armenian Genocide, which began on 24 April 1915 with the arrest of several hundred intellectuals in Constantinople.<sup>2</sup> But what did the German parliament and the German public know

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<sup>1</sup> This essay is an expanded and annotated written version of a lecture I gave on 3 October 2024 at the Tsitsernakaberd Genocide memorial in Yerevan.

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<sup>2</sup> This is not the place to provide a detailed overview of the extensive literature on the Armenian Genocide; reference shall be made only to the following general works and the bibliographical



about this genocide and to what extent? This article examines the possibilities and limitations of press reporting in the German Reich under martial law and the treatment of the Armenian Question in the Reichstag in Berlin. It sheds light on the central role played by Social Democrat Member of Parliament Karl Liebknecht in bringing this crime against humanity to public attention.

## I.

To begin with, it is necessary to provide some explanations about the German Reichstag in Berlin. The parliament of the German Empire met in the same building that houses the German Bundestag today, if one disregards the damages caused by the Reichstag fire on the night of 27-28 February 1933, the bombings of World War II and the intensive reconstruction of the 1960s.<sup>3</sup> Not only the dome, but also the interior of the building looks entirely different today. The plenary chamber has been modernized, and also the interior of the building bears no resemblance to the original assembly hall, which was completed in 1894. The electoral system of the German Empire was comparatively modern for its time: all German men over the age of 25 – excluding certain groups such as active-duty soldiers – had the right to vote. Women only gained the right to vote and stand for election during the November Revolution of 1918. Elections to the Reichstag were based on a pure majority voting system, similar to that used in the United Kingdom today. The country was divided into 397 constituencies, each represented by a single Member of Parliament. In the 1912 Reichstag elections, the last before the outbreak of World War I, the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) won the most seats, 110 out of 397. The next largest parliamentary groups were the Centre Party (Zentrum), the party representing German Catholics, with 91 seats and the National Liberal Party (Nationalliberale Partei, NLP) with 45 MPs. The SPD is the only political party from the German Empire that still exists today; it produced four Bundeskanzler: Willy Brandt, Helmut Schmidt, Gerhard Schröder, and recently, Olaf Scholz.

## II.

One of the 110 Social Democratic deputies elected in 1912 was Karl Liebknecht, whose biography will be briefly outlined below.<sup>4</sup> Born in the city of

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references they contain for further reading: Wolfgang Gust: *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern. Die Tragödie des ältesten Christenvolks der Welt*, München/Wien 1993; Rolf Hosfeld: *Die Operation Nemesis. Die Türkei, Deutschland und der Völkermord an den Armeniern*, Köln 2005; Hans-Lukas Kieser/Elmar Plozza (Ed.): *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern, die Türkei und Europa*, Zürich 2006; Raymond H. Kévorkian: *The Armenian Genocide. A complete History*, London/New York 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Michael. S. Cullen: *Der Reichstag. Im Spannungsfeld deutscher Geschichte*, 2. vollständig überarbeitete Auflage, Berlin 2004; ders.: *Der Reichstag – Symbol deutscher Geschichte*, Berlin 2014; Norman Foster/David Jenkins (Hrsg.): *Der neue Reichstag. Deutsche Bearbeitung von Jochen Gaile*, Mannheim 2000.

<sup>4</sup> For the biography of Karl Liebknecht, see: Heinz Wohlgemuth: *Karl Liebknecht. Eine Biographie*, Berlin 1973; Helmut Trotnow: *Karl Liebknecht – eine politische Biographie*, Köln 1980; Annelies Laschitzka: *Karl Liebknecht. Eine Biographie in Dokumenten*, Berlin 1982.

Leipzig in 1871, Liebknecht shared his birth year with two other key figures of the German social democracy: Rosa Luxemburg, the important theoretician of the left wing of the party, and Friedrich Ebert, who would later become Reich President. He belonged to the so-called second generation of Social Democratic politicians in Germany, though exceptional in one regard: his father Wilhelm Liebknecht (1826–1900) had already been a Social Democrat and was one of the founding fathers of the Social Democratic Party in the 1860s and 1870s. Alongside August Bebel (1840–1913), Wilhelm Liebknecht was one of the party's most influential leaders until his death, playing a central role in the development of the German Labour movement. His son Karl grew up in a materially and intellectually privileged home. He was able to complete his A-levels, study law, earn a doctorate in his subject and eventually become a lawyer. Karl Liebknecht was one of the few academically trained members within the SPD at the time; most of the party's parliamentarians were craftsmen. Liebknecht was elected to the Reichstag for the first time in 1912 and also held a seat in the Prussian Parliament, which likewise convened in Berlin, where the state parliament of the German capital meets today.

Following the outbreak of World War I in August 1914, the Reichstag was required to approve new war credits regularly. In the first vote on 4 August 1914, the SPD parliamentary group in the Reichstag, including Karl Liebknecht, voted unanimously in favour of approving the loans. However, at a prior internal group meeting Liebknecht and thirteen other MPs had voted against them, but ultimately bowed to the will of the majority. On 2 December 1914, Liebknecht became the first SPD deputy to publicly vote against the war credits in the Reichstag. But he was not alone. In the third vote on loans on 20 March 1915, both Liebknecht and fellow MP Otto Rühle publicly voted "No." Over the course of 1915, the minority within the SPD parliamentary group that rejected the war credits grew ever larger. In early February 1915, the authorities conscripted Liebknecht into military service – an attempt to silence the outspoken Social Democrat and remove him from the political stage. Nevertheless, Liebknecht was still able to attend sessions of both the Reichstag and the Prussian House of Representatives.

### III.

On 11 January 1916, Karl Liebknecht submitted three questions to the Reichstag, the first of which addressed the situation of the Armenian:

"Is the Reich Chancellor aware that during the present war in the allied Turkish empire the Armenian population has been driven from their homes by the hundreds of thousands and massacred? What steps has the Reich Chancellor taken with the allied Turkish government to bring about the necessary atonement, to ensure humane conditions for the remaining Armenian population in Turkey and to prevent the repetition of similar atrocities?"<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Stenographische Berichte der Verhandlungen des Deutschen Reichstags, 13. Legislaturperiode, 26. Sitzung vom 11. Januar 1916, S. 512f.

The enquiry was answered by the director of the political department of the Foreign Office, the Imperial Envoy Wilhelm von Stumm (1869-1935), a descendant of the Saarland coal and steel dynasty Stumm: "The Chancellor is aware that some time ago, prompted by the seditious activities of our opponents, the Turkish government resettled the Armenian population of certain parts of the Turkish Empire and assigned them new places of residence. Because of certain repercussions of this measure, an exchange of ideas is taking place between the German and Turkish governments. Further details cannot be given."

Karl Liebknecht did not want to put up with these diplomatic empty phrases and asked for the right to supplement his question. According to the official Reichstag transcript, the plenary responded with a reaction that seems wholly inappropriate given the subject matter: "Hilarity".

Liebknecht added: "Is the Chancellor aware that Professor Lepsius spoke of the extermination of the Turkish Armenians ....". At this point, the speaker was cut off by the left-liberal Reichstag President Johannes Kaempf (1842-1918). It is noteworthy that Karl Liebknecht uses the phrase "Prof. Lepsius spoke", rather than the words "wrote" or "claimed". This choice of words suggests that there was a personal meeting and conversation between Johannes Lepsius and Karl Liebknecht – unfortunately such a meeting could not yet be proven.<sup>6</sup> In one of the first "Spartacus Letters" published by the radical left wing around Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg on 27 January 1916, his parliamentary intervention in the Reichstag was classified as follows:

"The Turkish government has carried out a terrible massacre among the Armenians; the whole world knows about it – and the whole world blames Germany because German officers are in command of the government in Constantinople. Only in Germany is nothing known because the press is gagged. Pointing out these outrages was a merit."<sup>7</sup>

#### IV.

However, the significance of Karl Liebknecht's enquiry can only be fully understood, when contextualized within the specific media landscape of 1916, or more generally, that of the wartime years 1914 to 1918. First of all, newspapers and magazines were the only existing mass media in the German Empire. Cinema was still in its infancy and radio would not be introduced until 1923. The density of newspapers and magazines was much greater back then than it is today; and the majority of newspapers had a decidedly political viewpoint. For the Social Democratic Party, it was therefore of great importance to inform their members, supporters and voters about the political, economic and social situation in Germany from their own ideological perspective. On the eve of the First World War, the

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<sup>6</sup> According to information provided by the Johannes Lepsius House in Potsdam on 17 December 2024, there is no evidence of a meeting between Liebknecht and Lepsius.

<sup>7</sup> Karl Liebknecht: *Gesammelte Reden und Schriften*, Band VIII August 1914 bis April 1916, Berlin (Ost) 1982, S. 462.

SPD alone owned 91 daily newspapers and 65 party-owned printing presses. In addition, there were the non-daily newspapers, magazines and trade union journals.<sup>8</sup>

All newspapers in Germany, but first and foremost the press of the labour movement, came under close scrutiny following the outbreak of war in August 1914. Under the state of siege and a regime of censorship, truthful reporting on the course of the war was virtually impossible for four and a quarter years; defeats suffered by Germany and its allies were glossed over, war crimes were hushed up, propaganda and information were often mixed up in a way that was barely comprehensible to the ordinary newspaper reader. The sword of Damocles of imprisonment constantly hung over critical journalists and publicists, and critical newspapers were frequently banned. The “*Leipziger Volkszeitung*”, for example, was banned from 19 June until 1 July 1915 following the publication of the appeal for peace ‘The order of the day’ by the three SPD politicians Eduard Bernstein, Hugo Haase and Karl Kautsky. Similarly, the central organ “*Vorwärts*”, which had published the SPD party executive's appeal ‘Social Democracy and Peace’ on 23 June, was not allowed to appear from 26 June to 1 July.<sup>9</sup>

The heavily restricted freedom of the press in Germany did not mean that nothing at all was read about the Armenian Genocide in the German and especially the Social Democratic press in 1915. On 8 December 1915, for example, the SPD's central organ and daily newspaper “*Vorwärts*” published the complete text of a speech that Pope Benedict XV (1854–1922) had given a few days earlier at a consistory of cardinals in Rome: In it, the Pope denounced the war as unprecedented butchery and at the same time regretted the lack of consequences of all previous peace efforts, including his own: “Despite the enormous destruction that has accumulated in the course of 16 months, despite the fact that the desire for peace lives in hearts, despite the fact that so many families are pleading for peace with tears, despite the fact that we have taken all means suitable to somehow hasten peace and appease discord, we nevertheless see this disastrous war raging with fury on sea and land. On the other hand, the unfortunate Armenia is threatened with the last complete ruin.”<sup>10</sup>

Just as Benedict XV's statements were reported but not commented on, it was also possible to print statements by foreign politicians, even Germany's opponents of the war. For example, an article in the “*Vorwärts*” of 8 October 1915 reported on the “Armenian debate in the English House of Lords”.<sup>11</sup> The article stated that the number of victims was 800,000 at the time but commented that the figure was

<sup>8</sup> Gerhard Eisfeld/Kurt Koszyk: *Die Presse der deutschen Sozialdemokratie. Eine Bibliographie*, Bonn 2. Auflage 1980; Dieter Fricke: *Die sozialistische Presse 1869 bis 1917*, in: *Handbuch zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung 1869 bis 1917* (Bd. 1), Berlin (Ost) 1987, p. 495–660.

<sup>9</sup> Franz Osterroth/Dieter Schuster: *Chronik der deutschen Sozialdemokratie*, Bd. 1: *Bis zum Ende des Ersten Weltkriegs*, Bonn 2. Auflage 1975, p. 171f.

<sup>10</sup> „*Vorwärts*“ Nr. 338 from 8 December 1915 („Eine Ansprache des Papstes“).

<sup>11</sup> „*Vorwärts*“ Nr. 278 from 8 October 1915 („Armenierdebatte im englischen Oberhause“).

“hardly credible”. This means that the article considered the number of victims to be too high. Although “there was no German complicity in the murders, Germany was partly responsible as its influence in Constantinople was undeniable.” A member of the House of Lords demanded that the reports of the British consuls be communicated to the whole world; “in one district the population had been completely exterminated.” How might a contemporary reader of the “Vorwärts” reacted to the figures in this article? Would they think it was true, dismiss them as war propaganda, or see a mixture of both?

That the reader of 1915 considered it to be war propaganda is even the most likely variant, as such articles, which only reflected the one-sided Turkish point of view, can also be found in the ‘Vorwärts’. For example, on July 17, 1915, the SPD’s central organ printed a report entitled “The Armenians against Turkey” about the resistance of the Armenians against their expulsion and murder in the town of Charki Karahissis, known today as Sebinkarahisar.<sup>12</sup> The article justifies the actions of the imperial government of the Ottoman Empire, speaking of the “removal of the Armenians from their farms”, and claims that Armenians entrenched in the city’s citadel responded “to the fatherly and conciliatory advice of the local authorities with gunfire and bombs,” whereupon the resistance was broken with gunfire on the citadel. It continues: “In order to avoid this unpleasantness and to prevent the repetition of events in which not only the guilty but also the innocent and peaceful population suffers regrettable damage, the imperial government had to take certain preventive and restrictive measures against the revolutionary Armenians.” Rarely have the terms “expulsion” and “murder” been so thoroughly euphemized as in this article. However, that said, there are no articles in the “Vorwärts” like the one in the conservative ‘Deutsche Tageszeitung’ on 19 December 1915, which talks about the “Armenian hype” (“Armenierrummel”) or “Armenian atrocity hype”. It also states that the Armenians had deliberately provoked the Turkish reprisals in order to bring about Britain’s intervention in favour of the Armenians.<sup>13</sup> The author of this article, with the initials E. R., standing for Ernst Graf zu Reventlow (1862–1943), would go on to become an ardent National Socialist in the years that followed.

## V.

To cite one final but telling example that illustrates the climate in which Karl Liebknecht sided with the Armenians: On 14 December 1915, just four weeks before Karl Liebknecht’s action in the parliament, the “Vorwärts” published a leading article with the headline “The English defeat in Mesopotamia,” which also contained a whole paragraph about the Armenians. The Armenians had been “incited” by the English and Russians against “Turkish rule”: “A very well calculated plan, which seemed to offer a certain guarantee of success, because for

<sup>12</sup> „Vorwärts“ Nr. 195 from 17 July 1915 („Die Armenier gegen die Türkei“).

<sup>13</sup> „Deutsche Tageszeitung“ Nr. 636 from 19 December 1915 („Das Wesen der ‚armenischen Greuel‘“).

years the Turkish Armenians have been stirred up against the Turks by Russian-Armenian emissaries, and this agitation cannot be denied a certain success, although the Armenians living on the other side of the Turkish-Russian border are by no means treated better by the Russian government. In addition, there are all kinds of religious and economic differences between the Armenians and the neighboring Kurds. The Armenians, an Iranian tribe strongly mixed with Semitic and Turkmen elements [this definition is absolutely incorrect], are Christians and mostly followers of the Gregorian Church: the Kurds, on the other hand, an equestrian and pastoral people of Indo-European descent, are Mohammedans; for the most part, like the Ottomans, they belong to the Sunni faith, for the smallest part to the Shiite faith, like the Persians. And the economic contrasts are even sharper. The Armenians, who have a higher cultural status than the Kurds, are farmers, craftsmen, and, above all, traders.”

This is followed by a statement about the Armenians, echoing typical anti-Semitic stereotypes that also appeared in right-wing extremist circles in Germany: “There is no more cunning, more haggling and at the same time more unscrupulous trading people than the Armenians, who not only trade in their own country, but can also be found in all the inner marketplaces of Anatolia and the Anatolian and Syrian coastal towns as buyers, middlemen, money-grubbers, etc., and of whom a Syrian proverb claims that one grated Armenian trader is more cunning than seven Syrian-Jewish traders. In Kurdistan, too, the Armenians are in complete control of trade. What the Kurd needs, he buys from the Armenian, what he gains in livestock products, he sells to him - and is usually thoroughly cheated by the clever Armenian trader. In revenge, the stronger, rougher Kurds occasionally attack Armenian settlements, plunder them and massacre a number of Armenians.”<sup>14</sup>

So much for the author with the initials H. C., who is probably none other than Heinrich Cunow (1862–1936). Cunow was a journalist for the “Vorwärts” and the most important theoretical journal of the German social democracy, “Die Neue Zeit” (“The New Time”), whose editorship he took over after the ousting of the famous theorist Karl Kautsky (1854–1938). Cunow was the leading Marxist theorist of the SPD *after* Kautsky. He belonged to the so-called “Lensch-Cunow-Hänisch” group, i.e., originally representatives of the left wing of the party who had moved to the far right under the impact of the outbreak of war in 1914.<sup>15</sup> Of course, Heinrich Cunow had never been to Armenia, but his clearly racist remarks were based on a well-known source, either a passage from the second volume of the novel ‘Im Reich des Silbernen Löwen’ (‘In the Empire of the Silver Lion’) published in 1898 by the widely read adventure writer Karl May (1842–1912), or, more likely, a passage from the book ‘Asia’ by Friedrich Naumann (1860–1919)

<sup>14</sup> „Vorwärts“ Nr. 344 from 14 December 1915 („Die englische Niederlage in Mesopotamien“).

<sup>15</sup> Robert Sigel: Die Lensch-Cunow-Haenisch-Gruppe, Eine Studie zum rechten Flügel der SPD im Ersten Weltkrieg, Berlin 1976.

from 1899.<sup>16</sup> A Protestant pastor and left-liberal politician, Naumann, after World War II became the namesake of the Friedrich-Naumann-Foundation, the party foundation of the Free Democratic Party (FDP). Naumann had accompanied the German Emperor Wilhelm II on his trip to the Orient in 1898 and caused quite a stir with a reported statement by a German craftsman in Constantinople, in which a numerical ratio between Greeks, Jews and Armenians was also constructed to the disadvantage of the Armenians, and in which Naumann expressed his sympathy for the Hamid massacres in the 1890s.

## VI.

As we have seen, the mass murder of Armenians – although the term ‘genocide’ was not yet used at the time – was certainly mentioned in the press: At times, dismissed as a propaganda lie by the opponents of the war, and at other times acknowledged as a fact, because it was absolutely impossible to discredit the Pope as a member of the Entente. Given that the topic was certainly covered in the press, it is worth asking how often the words Armenia or Armenians appear in the Reichstag debates of 1915, 1916, and 1917. If you want to trust the information from the excellent search engine of the digitized protocols of the German Reichstag, the answer is: exactly twice. Once, the national-liberal deputy Ernst Bassermann (1854–1917) mentions the advance of Turkish troops in Armenia without establishing a connection with our topic,<sup>17</sup> and once Karl Liebknecht on that very 11 January 1916.

In the “Vorwärts” a different version of these sentences of Liebknecht is reproduced than in the Reichstag protocol. In the Social Democratic Central organ, this longer version appears: “Is the Reich Chancellor aware that Professor Lepsius spoke of the extermination of the Turkish Armenians **and that the German government is being held responsible for these atrocities by the Christian population of Turkey?**”<sup>18</sup> I am sure that this version is correct. How did the “Vorwärts” get hold of this longer version? Since the supplementary question was asked spontaneously by Karl Liebknecht, there are only two possibilities: either by Liebknecht himself or a journalist from the “Vorwärts” who followed the debate from the public gallery of the Reichstag and took notes. Why did the “Vorwärts” print this long passage? The editors sympathized with the party minority that rejected the war credits and thus also with Karl Liebknecht. Why is this longer version not mentioned in the protocol of the Reichstag? Quite simply: the last session printed in volume no. 306 is that of 16 March 1916. The stenographed

<sup>16</sup> Friedrich Naumann: „Asia“. Athen, Konstantinopel, Baalbek, Damaskus, Nazaret, Jerusalem, Kairo, Neapel, Berlin-Schöneberg 1899; cf. Hans-Walter Schmuhl: Friedrich Naumann und die Armenische Frage. Die deutsche Öffentlichkeit und die Verfolgung der Armenier vor 1915, in: Hans-Lukas Kieser/Dominik J. Schaller (Hrsg.): Der Völkermord an den Armeniern und die Shoah, Zürich 2002, S. 503–516.

<sup>17</sup> Stenographische Berichte der Verhandlungen des Deutschen Reichstags, 13. Legislaturperiode, 60. Sitzung vom 6. Juni 1916, p. 1526 (Bassermann talks about the Armenians).

<sup>18</sup> „Vorwärts“ Nr. 11 from 12 January 1916 („Reichstag“).

transcripts of the Reichstag speeches had to be typed up and revised, which certainly took several weeks. This protocol did not appear in its printed form until summer or autumn 1916. It was not politically opportune to refer to German responsibility for the Armenian Genocide; moreover, Karl Liebknecht had already been arrested and sent to prison at that time.

At the subsequent SPD parliamentary faction meeting on 12 January 1916, Karl Liebknecht was stripped of all the rights of a parliamentary group member, from which he drew the consequences and resigned his membership in the faction. In this tumultuous meeting, the topic of Armenia played no role at all, but the criticism was sparked by the fact that Liebknecht had not discussed his three questions with the parliamentary faction beforehand and had therefore acted on his own authority.<sup>19</sup> Liebknecht had also broken a taboo with the other two questions, which should not be forgotten here, by asking about the harassment of the civilian population of the occupied territories by the German occupying power, particularly in Belgium. On the other hand, he had demanded information about the extent of the restrictions on freedom imposed by the state of siege and the extent of the punishments imposed in this context.<sup>20</sup> After Karl Liebknecht had protested in Berlin on Labor Day, 1 May 1916, with the words “Down with the war! Down with the government!”, he was arrested and sentenced to four years and one month in prison for ‘war treason’ in August 1916. Incidentally, no one was tried for “peace treason.”

## VII.

What were Karl Liebknecht’s motives for his actions, for his solidarity with the Armenians? Certainly, there was also a desire for provocation based on his not entirely simple character, which should be neglected here, but first and foremost, there was a deeply humanitarian, humanistic attitude. In his war diary, Eduard David (1863–1930), the leader of the right wing of the SPD and an expert on foreign policy, suggests an alternative way of reacting to the information provided by Johannes Lepsius, the great enlightener on the Armenian Genocide.

Johannes Lepsius and Eduard David met on April 30, 1915. In his diary, David wrote: “Meeting with Professor Lepsius, who seems to be more of a scholar than a politician.”<sup>21</sup> This entry can be translated: A scholar can act according to moral principles, a politician cannot (always). After Liebknecht’s request on 11 January 1916, David noted: “Parliamentary group meeting. The Liebknecht case. New questions. His defense: Pathology of ‘consequence’.” On 18 January 1916, David noted: “Result of the Reichstag meeting. Haase and Hoch [two leaders of the left

<sup>19</sup> Die Reichstagsfraktion der deutschen Sozialdemokratie 1898 bis 1918, Second volume, edited by Erich Matthias and Eberhard Pikart, Düsseldorf 1966, p. 153–155.

<sup>20</sup> Stenographische Berichte der Verhandlungen des Deutschen Reichstags, 13. Legislaturperiode, 26. Sitzung vom 11. Januar 1916, p. 513.

<sup>21</sup> Das Kriegstagebuch des Reichstagsabgeordneten Eduard David 1914 bis 1918, edited by Susanne Miller in conjunction with Erich Matthias, Düsseldorf 1966, p. 123.



wing], out of the parliamentary party leadership!!! Liebknecht out of the parliamentary faction!!! Good beginnings, but now further emphatic objective work on the path to a reasonable policy.”<sup>22</sup> We all know that the division of the workers’ movement in Germany was and is rather detrimental to the breakthrough of reason in politics, and that a politician, who always acts consistently is seen as a pathological case, is probably more likely to be accused today in reverse, namely as a pathology of inconsistency or arbitrariness.

### VIII.

The next time the Armenians were mentioned in a plenary session of the Reichstag was two years and two and a half months later in the spring of 1918, during the ratification of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Russia, the defeated wartime opponent. One of the provisions of the dictated peace of Brest-Litovsk requested that the territories of Ardahan, Kars and Batum, which Russia had conquered in 1877/1878 during the Russo-Turkish War, be returned to Turkey. In the Reichstag, two speakers from the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD), founded in 1917, Hugo Haase (1863–1919) and Georg Ledebour (1850–1947), explicitly warned against these provisions of the treaty, which handed over a majority Armenian population to the regime of the Young Turks.<sup>23</sup> The two majority Social Democratic speakers Philipp Scheidemann and Eduard David did not say a word about the Armenians. The USPD rejected the treaty, while the majority Social Democrats abstained from voting. Hugo Haase spoke at the 145th session on 22 March 1918:

“One of the worst parts of the Russian treaty is that which refers to the territories now claimed by Turkey: Batum, Kars, Ardahan. [...] The right to self-determination of the peoples living there is thereby disregarded. We are all aware that if the peoples hold a free vote, they will not consider joining Turkey: certainly not the Armenians, but also not the others, who are by no means edified by the Turkish regime.

This provision is all the sadder as we have every reason to be very careful that no more Armenians are annexed to Turkey. I am not basing my assessment of the Armenian Question on documents from neutral foreign countries. The cries for help that have come to us from the German side cannot go unheeded in our country. I recall the appeals of the chairman of the German Orient Mission and the German-Armenian Society, Dr. Johann[es] Lepsius, I recall the appeal of the German teachers in Turkey and especially the heart-rending descriptions of the senior teacher [Martin] Niepage. According to all the news, and the observations made by the German teachers in particular, Lepsius describes the fate of the Armenians in Turkey in such a way that at least one third of all those who were deported perished during transportation. The men were systematically separated

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 152 und 154.

<sup>23</sup> Stenographische Berichte der Verhandlungen des Deutschen Reichstags, 13. Legislaturperiode, 145. Sitzung vom 22. März 1918, p. 4536–4569. (Haase p. 4540ff., Ledebour p. 4559ff.).

from their relatives at the beginning of the deportation and killed on the way, the boys were either islamized or killed. Girls and women have had to endure terrible things. Mass slaughter, kidnappings, violent Islamization, hunger and the superhuman efforts and deprivations have turned the giant caravans into a miserable pile of half-naked, sick, dying women, children and old people who found nothing to live for when they reached their destination.” [...] And we are supposed to take responsibility for the fact that areas with an Armenian population are played into the hands of the Turks? We will never, ever take responsibility for such a step.”<sup>24</sup>

Gustav Stresemann, the national-liberal party leader at the time, was the only speaker who did not come from the ranks of the USPD, who addressed the Armenian question, but in a euphemistic manner: “Insofar as events have taken place in this respect which could have prompted the German Reich to intervene for humanitarian reasons, this friendly and urgent influence on our Turkish allies has been exerted at all times. [...] Objectively, one should point out the extraordinarily difficult military situation in which Turkey found itself due to the behaviour of the Armenians in the border districts in the first months of this world war and that it was only due to these circumstances that it was able to resort to those means which later gave rise to complaints.”<sup>25</sup> The 1926 Nobel Peace Prize winner is simply repeating the empty phrases with which Mr von Stumm had already responded to Karl Liebkecht’s inquiry in January 1916.

## IX.

How can Karl Liebkecht’s behaviour be assessed from the vantage point of almost 110 years later, alongside the standpoints of the other members of the Reichstag, especially the other Social Democrats? What general conclusions can be drawn from Germany’s behaviour towards the Armenian Genocide? Why did all the other Members of Parliament remain silent? The most prevailing reason: because the Ottoman Empire was an important ally of the German Reich and human rights had to take second place to military and economic interests. For the majority of political actors at the time, Germany’s unwavering loyalty to Turkey – it’s so called *Nibelungentreue* was a sober weighing up of interests beyond all moral and humanistic criteria: Turkey was to be kept in line as an ally. As Friedrich Naumann had already stated in 1899: “Turkey may be constituted as it likes if it can only keep its head above water for a little while longer.”<sup>26</sup> This quote, too, has a certain timelessness that extends to the current debates of our day.

Incidentally, we experience this day in, day out: the plea for human rights rarely goes beyond mere lip service. Human rights are used as a weapon against states that we want to harm, while we graciously ignore or sweep under the carpet even

<sup>24</sup> Stenographische Berichte der Verhandlungen des Deutschen Reichstags, 13. Legislaturperiode, 145. Sitzung vom 22. März 1918, p. 4543.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 4545.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Naumann, Asia [cf. Footnote 16], p. 148.

massive human rights violations against friendly states. This does not contribute to the credibility of the West as a global political player – on the contrary.

Another timeless reason for the silence in 1915/16 is what I see as a completely inexplicable lack of interest, and in some cases even contempt, in Germany and in the so-called Western community of values as a whole towards the ancient Middle Eastern churches. Friedrich Naumann had already written in 1899 that the churches of the Near and Middle East were “a calcified, dusty, impoverished, dried-up Christianity, as arid as a stony wadi without water.”<sup>27</sup> After visiting a small Christian church in the Orient, Naumann came to the conclusion: “Isn’t Muhammadanism in some ways closer to us than the lower forms of Christianity? [...] What would it matter to us if this small church were a small mosque?”<sup>28</sup> Well, after 1915, hundreds of Armenian churches and monasteries were converted into mosques or destroyed altogether, as were Greek Orthodox churches in the northern part of Cyprus after 1974, as were Armenian churches in Azerbaijan after 1991, as have Christian churches in Iraq and Syria since the West’s attempt to bring about regime change there. What does all this mean: an immeasurable and irretrievable loss of cultural assets. After the German government’s decision to send German soldiers to Afghanistan in the wake of 9/11, the then German defense minister justified it with the words: “German freedom is being defended in the Hindu Kush!”<sup>29</sup> One could say with much more justification: “The Christian West is being defended in Armenia!”

Another conclusion to be drawn from the events of 1915/16 is that a failure to intervene in favour of persecuted people can serve as a blueprint for future criminals. Hitler regarded the Armenian Genocide as a prime example of the short moral memory of the international community. With the question “Who is still talking about the extermination of the Armenians today?”, he brushed aside concerns about the planned ruthless warfare shortly before the start of the Polish campaign on 22 August 1939.<sup>30</sup>

In January 1916, Karl Liebknecht was the only member of the Reichstag to raise the issue of the Armenian Genocide before the German nation at the time of the events and to stand by the Armenian people whose existence was threatened. He made this crime against humanity public. This happened a few months *before* Johannes Lepsius had 20,000 copies of his book “Bericht über die Lage des Armenischen Volkes in der Türkei” (“Report on the Situation of the Armenian People in Turkey”) printed and distributed to multipliers. None of the multipliers,

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>29</sup> From a government statement by Defence Minister Peter Struck on 11 March 2004; the quote is often cited with the term “freedom”, but the original reads: ‘Our security is not only, but also defended in the Hindu Kush.’ <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/service/newsletter-und-abos/bulletin/regierungserklaerung-des-bundesministers-fuer-verteidigung-dr-peter-struck--792688>.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Norman Domeier: Weltherrschaft und Völkermorden. Die „Lochner-Version“ der Hitler-Rede vom 22. August 1939 als Schlüsseldokument nationalsozialistischer Weltanschauung, in: Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft 70 (2022), p. 542–567, here p. 564.

and certainly no Reichstag member, would have found the time to read a 300-page book in the tense situation of World War I. On 7 August 1916, the report was banned by the censors and the remaining copies were destroyed. The “Vorwärts” still had several hundred thousand subscribers and perhaps more than a million readers in 1916. The more newspapers in the archives will be digitized, the easier it will be to research whether other publications also reported on Karl Liebknecht’s intervention. A notable example is the central organ of the Social Democratic Party in Switzerland; the Zurich-based newspaper “Volksrecht” also printed the longer version of his statement in the Reichstag.<sup>31</sup> Karl Liebknecht made the Armenian Genocide public a few months earlier than Johannes Lepsius who tried to influence the German society with his book and his statement reached a much wider audience in terms of numbers.<sup>32</sup>

After his release from prison in October 1918, Karl Liebknecht sided with the so-called Spartacus League, from which the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) emerged on 1 January 1919. Together with Rosa Luxemburg, he instigated the Spartacus Uprising in January 1919, which was intended to prevent the election to the German National Assembly. I consider this uprising to be a major historical mistake but rarely has anyone paid for such a mistake like Karl Liebknecht. On 15 January 1919, he was arrested and murdered by right-wing extremist soldiers. He was only 48 years old. Perhaps Liebknecht would have realized his mistake and returned to Social Democracy? There are other politicians who acted in this way like the chairman of the Communist Party Paul Levi (1883–1930), who became a member of the SPD again in 1922. Perhaps he would not have become a communist if he had not been thrown into prison in 1916 for exercising his right to freedom of expression? None of this is known. But there is no doubt that he was still a Social Democrat when he showed solidarity with the Armenians. This solidarity deserves every possible recognition.

## X.

This recognition could also manifest itself in the Republic of Armenia commemorating Karl Liebknecht; Armenia does not need any suggestions from Germany or a German historian as far as the form of commemorative culture is concerned. However, it would be a very noble gesture to dedicate one of the beautiful stamps of the Armenian postal service to Karl Liebknecht; perhaps he could also be honored with a commemorative plaque on the memorial wall in the Genocide memorial Tsitsernakaberd. But to say it again: the Armenian politics of remembrance is a matter for the Armenians alone. The parties in Germany today that see themselves in the tradition of the worker’s movement, can look back with pride and satisfaction on this unprecedented act of solidarity by a Social

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<sup>31</sup> “Volksrecht” Nr. 11 from 14 January 1916 (“Liebknechts Anfragen”).

<sup>32</sup> On October 5, 1915, Johannes Lepsius had already held a press conference in Berlin about the massacres of the Armenians and criticized the Reich government, which was reported on the sidelines in the press.

Democratic member of parliament. Karl Liebknecht's actions can also serve as a benchmark for all democrats in our increasingly difficult times and as a guide to courage and moral courage.

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### **Conflict of Interests**

The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

### **Ethical Standards**

The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.

## THE DYNAMICS OF FRANCE-TURKEY RELATIONS FROM 2007 TO 2012

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### Abstract

This paper examines the dynamics of France-Turkey relations during their second historical stage, spanning from 2007 to the end of 2012, a period marked by the simultaneous presidencies of Nicolas Sarkozy in France and Abdullah Gül in Turkey. The relevance of this study lies in understanding how bilateral relations evolved under the strain of diverging strategic priorities, competing geopolitical visions, and the persistent question of Turkey's accession to the European Union.

The research employs a multidisciplinary methodological framework centered on strategic analysis. This approach is further supported by event analysis, which enables the identification and examination of key turning points and critical developments shaping bilateral relations, as well as content analysis, which systematically evaluates diplomatic communications, policy documents, official statements, and media coverage in order to capture the narratives and discourses structuring Franco-Turkish interactions. Through this methodological design, the study traces the interplay between structural constraints and political agency, with particular emphasis on the security architecture of the European continent, France's quest to consolidate its role within and beyond Europe, and Turkey's aspiration to assert greater involvement in European affairs while expanding its influence in other regional contexts.

The findings demonstrate that, despite recurrent difficulties and contradictions - rooted not only in geopolitical and strategic divergences but also in civilizational, ideological, and value-based differences - the period nevertheless witnessed the preservation of a steady trajectory of bilateral engagement. This trajectory was characterized by the coexistence of obstacles and cooperation, ultimately functioning as a driving force for continued dialogue and collaboration.

The paper argues that this dual dynamic of conflict and cooperation constitutes a defining feature of the period, placing it as a distinct and significant stage within the broader historical continuum of Franco-Turkish relations.

**Keywords:** *France-Turkey relations, presidential elections, Europe Puissance, European Union, bilateral strategic dialogue, turkish secularism, Christian identity, cooperation, cultural events, multilateral platforms.*

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## Introduction

The trajectory of France-Turkey relations assumed a qualitatively new dimension in the aftermath of the presidential elections in both countries, which brought Nicolas Sarkozy to power in France and Abdullah Gül to the presidency in Turkey. The convergence of these leadership changes created a new political context that reshaped the dynamics of bilateral interaction. The period of their respective tenures may be analytically framed as the second stage in the evolution of bilateral relations, marked not only by the broadening of multifaceted and multi-vector cooperation but also by the emergence of new areas of tension and negotiation. This stage witnessed France and Turkey engaging in dialogue on issues ranging from economic exchange and regional security to cultural diplomacy and European integration, each sphere reflecting both opportunities for partnership and points of divergence.

By virtue of its significance and its far-reaching outcomes, this phase occupies a distinct and noteworthy place within the broader historical continuum of Franco-Turkish relations, representing a period when bilateral ties were simultaneously tested and deepened in response to shifting international and domestic imperatives.

## The EU Accession Issue and Turkey's Political Transition

During this period, the issue of Turkey's accession to the European Union retained its salience, generating developments that constituted qualitatively new phenomena in the framework of bilateral relations between the two states. This occurred notwithstanding the fact that the presidency of the newly elected Abdullah Gül was widely perceived as inaugurating a "new era in Turkish politics,"<sup>1</sup> insofar as he was the first president to embed political Islam as a visible and influential factor within the structures of state governance.<sup>2</sup>

It should be emphasized that Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's decision to nominate Abdullah Gül as a presidential candidate was met with

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<sup>1</sup> Sayın Gül, bu yemini hiçbir zaman unutmayın. Radikal, August 29, 2007. <https://web.archive.org/web/20070930220642/http://www.radikal.com.tr/index.php?tarih=29%2F08%2F2007> (accessed July 3, 2025).

<sup>2</sup> "Gül'ün adaylığını doğru bulmuyoruz". CNN Turk, August 14, 2007. <https://www.cnnturk.com/2007/turkiye/08/14/gulun.adayligini.dogru.bulmuyoruz/384226.0/index.html> (accessed May 11, 2025).



sharp criticism and resistance from secular segments of Turkish society.<sup>3</sup> In May 2007, Gül's initial attempt to assume the presidency was blocked by the Constitutional Court. However, following the parliamentary elections of 2007<sup>4</sup>, in which the Justice and Development Party secured 46.6 percent of the vote, Gül was elected as the country's new president, thereby inaugurating a new phase in the political history of Turkey.

### **Sarkozy's Position and Early Frictions**

In contrast to the policies pursued by former President Jacques Chirac, Nicolas Sarkozy consistently expressed opposition to Turkey's accession to the European Union from the very beginning of his presidency.<sup>5</sup> Already during his electoral campaign, Sarkozy had pledged to derail the accession negotiations, an issue on which, once elected, he adopted a political stance that, while still restrictive, was more nuanced than the uncompromising position articulated during the campaign.

As early as the beginning of 2007, Sarkozy declared that "Turkey has no place within the European Union," further stressing that "Europe must have clearly defined borders, so that not all countries aspire to become members of the organization - starting with Turkey, which has no place within the territory of the European Union".<sup>6</sup>

President Nicolas Sarkozy formally grounded his arguments in the geographic principle of Europe as a strategic power (*Europe Puissance*)<sup>7</sup>, as well as in the imperatives of consolidating and sustaining the dominance of European culture. Concurrently, he emphasized the centrality of French public opinion and its expression - a factor of critical importance for advancing his broader political agenda effectively.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Gül: Adaylığımız devam ediyor. *Hurriyet*, May 5, 2007. <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/gul-adayligimiz-devam-ediyor-6497246> (accessed May 5, 2025).

<sup>4</sup> Turkish main opposition takes judicial bill to Constitutional Court. *Hurriyet Daily News*, February 26, 2014. <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-main-opposition-takes-judicial-bill-to-constitutional-court-62977> (accessed July 7, 2025).

<sup>5</sup> Turkey's EU hopes fade with Sarkozy. *Financial times*, May 7, 2007. <https://www.ft.com/content/55374310-fc82-11db-9971-000b5df10621> (accessed July 3, 2025).

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<sup>7</sup> Nicolas Sarkozy fait de la construction de l'Europe une "priorité absolue". *Les Echos*, August 27, 2007. <https://www.lesechos.fr/2007/08/nicolas-sarkozy-fait-de-la-construction-de-leurope-une-priorite-absolue-553425> (accessed May 18, 2025).

<sup>8</sup> Açık, Eşref. *Geçmişten Günümüze Türkiye-Fransa İlişkileri*, İstanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 2008, p. 526. <https://www.kitapsepeti.com/urun/detay/kitap/gecmisten-gunumuze-turkiye-fransa-iliskileri/327466> (accessed April 20, 2025).

## Cultural and Civilizational Dimensions

Even during his tenure as Minister of the Interior, Sarkozy had faced criticism for his statements and policy decisions regarding Muslim communities residing in France. According to Turkish sources, these positions reflected discriminatory tendencies not only toward Muslim populations but also toward Islam and Islamic civilization more broadly.<sup>9</sup> Sarkozy consistently underscored his profound and close affiliation with Christian values and heritage, framing these as integral to the foundational principles of the European Union. In line with the perspective held by a substantial portion of European society, he construed Christian identity as a core element in the construction and perception of European identity.

Thus, given these emphases, a Muslim-majority country - Turkey, in this instance - was perceived as potentially weakening the sense of European identity and ultimately undermining the cohesion of the Christian cultural and civilizational framework.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, Sarkozy advocated for the creation and development of a framework for strategic partnership as an alternative to full EU membership, aimed at further strengthening Turkey-EU relations. This approach simultaneously generated new points of tension in bilateral relations<sup>11</sup>, beginning with Turkey's initiative to establish the Union for the Mediterranean and the subsequent process of its accession - a process in which both countries were actively engaged - and extending to the complex realities of the Eastern Mediterranean and their resolution<sup>12</sup>, issues which continue to exert a significant influence on the trajectory of Franco-Turkish relations.

It should be noted that the European Commission envisions three possible approaches for evaluating candidates for EU membership, which effectively delineate the initial phase of dialogue between the Union and the candidate state, thereby creating the conditions for eventual accession<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Sarkozy, *L'Europe et la concurrence*. Le Figaro, July 30, 2007.

[https://www.lefigaro.fr/debats/2007/07/30/0100520070730ARTFIG90128sarkozy\\_l\\_europe\\_et\\_la\\_concurrence.php](https://www.lefigaro.fr/debats/2007/07/30/0100520070730ARTFIG90128sarkozy_l_europe_et_la_concurrence.php) (accessed May 18, 2025).

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<sup>12</sup> The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), <https://ufmsecretariat.org/who-we-are/member-states/> (accessed May 31, 2025).

<sup>13</sup> Torreblanca, Jose. *Sarkozy's foreign policy: where do European interests and values stand?* Política Exterior, 122, Madrid, 2008, p. 2.

First, member states must demonstrate commitment and readiness to prepare the candidate for the negotiation process. Second, they are expected to encourage and support the candidate state in implementing domestic reforms. The third approach involves the consolidation and institutionalization of political and cultural dialogue between candidate states and the European Union.

Within this context, Sarkozy adopted a decidedly negative stance regarding Turkey's involvement in such processes, primarily taking into account France's security environment and its broader implications, as well as the strategic priorities and agenda of French foreign policy.

In this context, Sarkozy's address at the fifteenth meeting of EU ambassadors on August 27, 2007, must be carefully considered. He stated: "I believe that the idea of partnership will one day be recognized by all as the most sensible approach. Meanwhile, like Prime Minister Erdoğan, I also hope that Turkey and France will restore the special relationship they have cultivated over a long shared history. I did not wish to raise this issue prior to the simplification of the treaty, as that would have created a complete deadlock. We cannot solve problems by creating a single, overarching impasse; we must address them by identifying appropriate solutions. Of the 35 chapters to be opened, 30 are compatible with the concept of partnership, while five relate exclusively to accession. I told the Turkish Prime Minister: let us focus on the thirty chapters compatible with partnership first, and then we will evaluate their effectiveness".<sup>14</sup>

It is hardly surprising that immediately prior to this speech, Sarkozy engaged in active lobbying to annul the aforementioned five chapters, thereby effectively vetoing Turkey's accession and preventing the addition of these new legislative chapters in the ongoing EU-Turkey negotiations.<sup>15</sup> Apart from the Republic of Cyprus, which Turkey does not recognize *de jure*, France was in fact the only country whose vetoes interrupted the negotiation process, thereby securing a "special" place in the Turkish political memory and, in turn, exacerbating bilateral tensions.

The five chapters in question were: Agriculture and Rural Development (Chapter 11); Economic and Monetary Policy (Chapter 17); Regional Policy

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<https://www2.uned.es/dcpa/Profesores/126JIgnacioTorreblanca/126Publicaciones/Torreblanca-Sarkozy-Foreign-Policy.pdf> (accessed May 31, 2025).

<sup>14</sup> Nicolas Sarkozy, Speech at the Fifteenth (EU) Ambassadors' Conference. Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères, August 27, 2007.

<https://pastel.diplomatie.gouv.fr/editorial/actual/ael2/bulletin.gb.asp?liste=20070829.gb.html&submit.x=5&submit.y=11&submit=consulter#Chapitre1> (accessed May 18, 2025).

<sup>15</sup> France puts brakes on EU-Turkey talks. DW, June 25, 2007. <https://www.dw.com/en/france-puts-brakes-on-eu-turkey-talks/a-2634947> (accessed April 25, 2025).

and the Coordination of Structural Instruments (Chapter 22); Financial and Budgetary Provisions (Chapter 33); and Institutions (Chapter 34).<sup>16</sup>

Ultimately, Sarkozy argued that these chapters were directly linked to accession and that their immediate inclusion was not an urgent agenda item. In essence, this rationale represented a French strategy to establish Turkey as a “privileged partner” rather than a full EU member, serving as an alternative framework to formal accession.

### **The Union for the Mediterranean and Bilateral Stability**

As noted above, the establishment of the Union for the Mediterranean framework was a central project for the French side, which sought to assume an influential role in the region. This objective, in turn, required maintaining as cautious and balanced a relationship as possible with all members of the framework, including Turkey. During the same period, Turkey also sought to assert a dominant role not only in Europe but in other regions as well. Consequently, its foreign policy priorities placed particular emphasis on establishing deeper relations with countries in the Middle East and North Africa, thereby ensuring both active engagement and a direct presence in these regions.

It is logical that, during this period, confronting Turkey directly would have been an ineffective and impractical course of action for Sarkozy. Nevertheless, France not only worked to ensure the continued support of the other members of the Union regarding this issue, but also sought to avoid any potential deterioration in relations with regional states. Consequently, for Sarkozy, a policy of delaying confrontation with Turkey and preventing the deterioration of bilateral relations remained the most strategically viable option. By pursuing this approach, the French side was able to avoid sharp conflicts with Turkey while continuing to uphold a policy of maintaining relations - a stance encapsulated in Sarkozy’s statement: “I have always opposed this allegiance and continue to oppose it, and I believe the majority of the organization’s member states share France’s view”.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout his presidency, Nicolas Sarkozy consistently reminded his electorate in speeches and public statements that he would use the referendum mechanism to block, by all possible means, Turkey’s accession

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<sup>16</sup> France blocks start of Turkey eurozone talks. Euobserver, June 25, 2007.

<https://euobserver.com/enlargement/24354> (accessed April 25, 2025).

<sup>17</sup> Sarkozy et Obama s’opposent sur l’Entrée de la Turquie dans l’UE. Liberation, April 5, 2009. <http://www.liberation.fr/monde/0101560325-sarkozy-et-obama-s-opposent-sur-l-entree-de-la-turquie-dans-l-ue> (accessed May 18, 2025).

to the European Union. In this context, the referendum was considered the optimal strategic tool to delay any potential progress in current and future EU-Turkey relations. According to Turkish sources, Sarkozy's approach was also evident in his statements regarding changes to the referendum process<sup>18</sup>, with his main argument being that the referendum should not be automatic but should remain a maneuver that the French side could deploy only if necessary. Hence, the French intention is clear: Turkey would become the first, and perhaps the last, successful candidate required to win the hearts and minds of the French public.<sup>19</sup>

Consequently, the next step was to introduce a new subparagraph into Article 88-5, which would allow such maneuvering. This new subparagraph made a referendum mandatory for any prospective member state whose population exceeded 5 percent of the Union's total population. The French National Assembly approved this bill on May 29, 2008.<sup>20</sup>

It can be said that, during this period, divergent views emerged within the French political leadership regarding the policy toward Turkey. Even with this newly enacted bill, it was perceived by some as an attempt to constitutionalize hostility toward a particular country-in this case, Turkey.<sup>21</sup> In this context, Senator Jacques Blanc's remark essentially summarized the predominant criticism: "One should not point a finger at a friendly country."<sup>22</sup> Shortly thereafter, on June 24, 2008, the French Senate rejected the bill by a vote of 297 to 7, seeking to avoid further deepening the already tense relations between the two countries, which were on the brink of a profound crisis for various reasons.

The political developments during this period were directly influenced by France's presidency of the Council of the European Union, which lasted from July 1 to December 31, 2008.<sup>23</sup> Throughout this tenure, the French side

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<sup>18</sup> France says blunt 'non' to Turkey. France24, February 25, 2011. <https://www.france24.com/en/20110225-france-sarkozy-gul-turkey-eu-hopes> (accessed April 25, 2025).

<sup>19</sup> Sarkozy Is Criticized on a Visit to Turkey. The New York Times, February 26, 2011. <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/26/world/europe/26turkey.html> (accessed May 31, 2025).

<sup>20</sup> Turkey not fit for EU accession: Sarkozy, DW, February 26, 2011, <https://www.dw.com/en/turkey-not-fit-for-eu-accession-sarkozy/a-14875593> (accessed May 31, 2025).

<sup>21</sup> Un Référendum sur la Turquie dans l'UE 'si la question se posait. Le Figaro, May 29, 2008. <https://www.lefigaro.fr/politique/2008/05/29/01002-20080529ARTFIG00694-ue-referendum-obligatoire-pour-l-entree-de-la-turquie.php> (accessed July 3, 2025).

<sup>22</sup> Pourquoi Gifler les Turcs. Liberation, May 4, 2008. <http://www.liberation.fr/tribune/010182345-pourquoi-gifler-les-turcs> (accessed May 18, 2025).

<sup>23</sup> A Successful Presidency - Results of the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Fondation Robert Schuman, December 15, 2008. <https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/european-issues/0121-a-successful-presidency-results-of-the-french-presidency-of-the-council-of-the-european-union> (accessed April 20, 2025).

employed all possible measures to disrupt any potential changes in EU–Turkey relations, striving to maintain the process in a maximally stalemated position.

During Sarkozy’s presidency, on December 19, 2008, two additional chapters related to Turkey’s accession were opened: “Free Movement of Capital (Chapter 4)” and “Information Society and Media (Chapter 10)”.<sup>24</sup> This development indicated that both countries still retained a certain degree of opportunity to influence the course of political events, primarily with the goal of maximizing the realization of their own interests, taking into account existing and potential opportunities arising directly from these changes.

France’s motivation for halting negotiations in the process was primarily based on the conviction that EU accession serves as a crucial lever for modernization and democratization in Turkey. This issue continues to intersect with Turkey’s external political and economic objectives, introducing a complex array of contradictions and contentious new challenges into bilateral relations and their future trajectory. At the same time, this dynamic functions as a strategic tool for the French side, which can be used to restrain and counterbalance Turkey when necessary.

It should be noted that during this historical phase, Franco-Turkish cultural and educational relations also experienced a distinctive development. According to Turkish sources, Turkey encountered certain challenges in the context of cultural relations during Sarkozy’s presidency<sup>25</sup>, emphasizing that, due to tense incidents, the possibility of utilizing public diplomacy as a tool was restrained, despite the positive initiatives in France at the outset of the event known as the “Turkish Season.”

As France’s Minister of Culture, Frédéric Mitterrand, remarked at the opening of the Turkish Season: “This is a new and astonishingly diverse Turkey that the French will experience<sup>26</sup>”. The events, which took place across 77 French cities, introduced specific changes within the broader context of bilateral relations.

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<sup>24</sup> Lequesne, Cristian and Rozenberg, Olivier. *The French Presidency of 2008: the Unexpected Agenda*, Stockholm, 2008, p. 15. <https://hal-sciencespo.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01064402/document> (accessed May 11, 2025).

<sup>25</sup> *Présentation de la Saison de la Turquie en France*. Ministère de la culture, June 30, 2009. <https://www.culture.gouv.fr/Nous-connaître/Decouvrir-le-ministère/Histoire-du-ministère/Ressources-documentaires/Discours-de-ministres/Discours-de-ministres-depuis-1998/Frederic-Mitterrand-2009-2012/Articles-2009-2012/Présentation-de-la-Saison-de-la-Turquie-en-France> (accessed May 18, 2025).

<sup>26</sup> Mitterrand, Lyrique avec la Turquie. *Liberation*, July 1, 2009. <http://www.liberation.fr/culture/0101577241-mitterrand-lyrique-avec-la-turquie> (accessed May 18, 2025).

Thus, the Turkish Season was held from July 1, 2009, to March 31, 2010<sup>27</sup>, encompassing the implementation of 400 diverse and multifaceted cultural events - an initiative that was unprecedented in the history of cultural relations between the two countries. It should be noted that the foundations for the Season had been laid during the tenure of former President Jacques Chirac<sup>28</sup>, in 2006, during the celebration of *Le Printemps Français* (the French Spring) in Turkey.<sup>29</sup> Together with his Turkish counterpart, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, Chirac had planned to allocate a budget of 23 million euros for this cultural festival, which, similar to the French Spring, reflected the ongoing expansion of Franco-Turkish cultural relations - relations that were enriched year by year with new initiatives and often served as a key guarantor of bilateral stability.<sup>30</sup> The first official state visit associated with France-Turkey relations in this context was made by Turkish President Abdullah Gül to Paris<sup>31</sup> for the opening ceremony of the initiative.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, it can be argued that, despite its apparent contribution to strengthening bilateral ties, this event did not achieve the predictable or desired impact that the parties had anticipated. While it was regarded as a new starting point for active cultural cooperation<sup>33</sup>, in reality, it remained largely confined to official statements and ceremonial events, without yielding any tangible results.

Nevertheless, the dynamics of bilateral relations between the two countries maintained a relative stability, supported in large part by frequent reciprocal visits. Between 2009 and 2010, more than seventy official exchanges took place<sup>34</sup>, reflecting a mutual readiness to develop and

<sup>27</sup> La Saison de la Turquie en France, [http://www.tv5monde.com/TV5Site/publication/publi-281-La\\_Saison\\_de\\_la\\_Turquie\\_en\\_France.htm](http://www.tv5monde.com/TV5Site/publication/publi-281-La_Saison_de_la_Turquie_en_France.htm) (accessed May 11, 2025).

<sup>28</sup> Message de M. Jacques Chirac, Président de la République, sur la manifestation culturelle "Printemps français d'Istanbul". Elysée, March 28, 2006. <https://www.elysee.fr/jacques-chirac/2006/03/28/message-de-m-jacques-chirac-president-de-la-republique-sur-la-manifestation-culturelle-printemps-francais-distanbul-le-28-mars-2006> (accessed May 11, 2025).

<sup>29</sup> C'est le Printemps français en Turquie. *L'écho touristique*, April 10, 2006. <https://www.lechotouristique.com/article/c-est-le-printemps-francais-en-turquie,10071> (accessed April 23, 2025).

<sup>30</sup> La Saison de la Turquie en France, <https://www.grandpalais.fr/fr/la-saison-de-la-turquie-en-france> (accessed May 11, 2025).

<sup>31</sup> Abdullah Gül en quête d'Europe à Paris. *Liberation*, October 9, 2009. [https://www.liberation.fr/planete/2009/10/09/abdullah-gul-en-quete-d-europe-a-paris\\_586658/](https://www.liberation.fr/planete/2009/10/09/abdullah-gul-en-quete-d-europe-a-paris_586658/) (accessed April 20, 2025).

<sup>32</sup> Le président turc Abdullah Gül en visite à Paris. *France24*, October 8, 2009. [https://www.france24.com/fr/20091008-le-pr%C3%A9sident-turc-abdullah-g%C3%BCI-visite-%C3%A0-paris-\[field\\_surtitre-formatted\]-0](https://www.france24.com/fr/20091008-le-pr%C3%A9sident-turc-abdullah-g%C3%BCI-visite-%C3%A0-paris-[field_surtitre-formatted]-0) (accessed May 11, 2025).

<sup>33</sup> Noce, Vincent. *Turquie Express pour Sarkozy*. *Liberation*, October 12, 2009. <http://www.liberation.fr/culture/0101596496-turquie-express-pour-sarkozy> (accessed July 3, 2025).

<sup>34</sup> Visites bilatérales, <https://tr.ambafrance.org/-Visites-bilaterales-> (accessed July 3, 2025).



strengthen cooperation and interaction in light of shared interests and geopolitical developments. However, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan repeatedly expressed concern that, despite visits by both the Turkish President and Prime Minister to France, President Sarkozy had not yet reciprocated with an official visit to Turkey since assuming office.<sup>35</sup>

Regarding the situation in Turkey, it should be noted that during the entire period of governance by the Justice and Development Party (AKP), Turkey's influence expanded significantly across the former territories of the Ottoman Empire, particularly in the Middle East and the Balkans. This strategic orientation was developed by former Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu<sup>36</sup>, whose approach has been characterized by many analysts as Neo-Ottomanism or Neo-Ottomanist policy.<sup>37</sup> Within this framework, addressing Turkey's potential accession to the European Union, Davutoğlu stated that Turkey would never request EU membership, no matter how central this issue might be to the state's foreign policy agenda<sup>38</sup>. In doing so, he effectively redefined and recontextualized the Turkish factor's existence, its influence, and its significant role within the contemporary international arena.

### **Economic Relations and the Transition to Hollande**

France-Turkey relations, in all their complexity, continued to develop across multilateral platforms as well, including the G20, over which France held the presidency at that time. During this period, President Sarkozy made a brief six-hour visit to Ankara in his capacity as the leader of the twenty largest economies, during which he once again reaffirmed France's position on the impossibility of Turkey's EU accession, proposing instead the alternative of a strategic partnership. His Turkish counterpart, Abdullah Gül, immediately responded, emphasizing that EU membership remained a consistent priority within Turkey's foreign policy agenda and urging the French side to refrain from influencing the ongoing process - a circumstance that could significantly undermine Franco-Turkish relations and their future

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<sup>35</sup> Turkish PM criticises Sarkozy ahead of Ankara visit. RFI, February 24, 2011. <https://www.rfi.fr/en/europe/20110224-turkish-pm-criticises-sarkozy> (accessed June 7, 2025).

<sup>36</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, <http://www.biyografi.net/kisiyrinti.asp?kisiid=2063> (accessed April 20, 2025).

<sup>37</sup> Erdoğan: AK Parti'nin yeni genel başkan adayı Ahmet Davutoğlu. Radikal, August 21, 2014. <http://www.radikal.com.tr/politika/erdogan-ak-partinin-yeni-genel-baskan-adayi-ahmet-davutoglu-1208245/> (accessed April 25, 2025).

<sup>38</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu: Turkey 'will never beg' for EU membership. National Turk, December 20, 2012. <https://www.nationalturk.com/en/ahmet-davutoglu-turkey-eu-membership-30790/> (accessed April 20, 2025).



prospects. Gül stressed that the organization should honor its commitment, thereby allowing Turkey to successfully complete the process underway.<sup>39</sup>

Prior to his visit to Ankara, President Sarkozy granted an interview to the well-known Turkish journalist Mehmet Ali Birand. Summarizing the outcomes, Birand conveyed the clear messages Sarkozy addressed to both Turkey's political leadership and its society: Turkey's true place is not within the European Union but rather in the Middle East; Turkey's EU accession would ultimately benefit neither Europe nor Turkey. In doing so, Sarkozy once again reaffirmed the French position on the matter, emphasizing that Turkey bridges East and West - a unique role no other country can assume. He stressed that one should not remain confined by the patterns of the past, recognizing Turkey's active engagement in ongoing geopolitical developments, while simultaneously expressing readiness to deepen cooperation concerning Middle Eastern realities - without being bound by historical legacies, but rather acting and working collaboratively in light of current circumstances and the existing level and nature of bilateral relations.<sup>40</sup>

Regarding the bilateral trade and economic relations, President Sarkozy noted that France is the third-largest foreign investor in Turkey. In 2010, the volume of bilateral trade reached €12 billion<sup>41</sup>, with plans to further increase these figures. He also emphasized that Turkey is an indispensable partner for France within the G20 framework, highlighting France's strong desire to secure Turkey's support in G20-related matters.<sup>42</sup>

In May 2012, the next French presidential elections were held<sup>43</sup>, resulting in President Nicolas Sarkozy being succeeded by François Hollande, the candidate of the French Socialist Party. Hollande received 28.63% of the votes in the first round, securing first place and advancing to the second

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<sup>39</sup> Sarkozy receives cool welcome in Ankara. Financial times, February 26, 2011. <https://www.ft.com/content/0ea78022-4107-11e0-bf62-00144feabdc0> (accessed May 18, 2025).

<sup>40</sup> Nicolas Sarkozy: Turkey's place is not in the European Union, but in the Middle East. Panorama, February 25, 2011. <https://www.panorama.am/am/news/2011/02/25/sarkozi-turkey/985423> (accessed July 3, 2025).

<sup>41</sup> Nicolas Sarkozy: The European Union is not Turkey's place. Aysor, October 7, 2011. <https://www.aysor.am/am/news/2011/10/07/sarkozy-turkey-eu/343871> (accessed July 3, 2025).

<sup>42</sup> Sarkozy'yi Fransa lideri olarak ağırlamayacağız!. CNN Turk, February 24, 2011. <https://www.cnntrk.com/2011/dunya/02/24/sarkozyyi.fransa.lideri.olarak.agirlamayacagiz/607985.0/index.html> (accessed July 3, 2025).

<sup>43</sup> Décision N° 2012-154 PDR du 10 mai 2012, portant proclamation des résultats de l'élection du Président de la République, <https://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/decision/2012/2012154PDR.htm> (accessed April 25, 2025).

round alongside Sarkozy. In the runoff held on May 6, 2012, Hollande emerged victorious over Sarkozy, becoming the 24th President of France.<sup>44</sup>

## Conclusion

Overall, the trajectory of Franco-Turkish relations during the period under review remained largely stable, despite the emergence of significant challenges and tensions. These difficulties were primarily rooted in the divergent strategic priorities and objectives of the two states: on the one hand, safeguarding European continental security while consolidating their respective roles and influence within the broader European framework; on the other hand, pursuing deeper engagement and expanding geopolitical influence in adjacent regions - a process that, at various junctures, encountered structural and operational obstacles. These tensions were further intensified by differences in civilizational outlooks, value systems, and ideological orientations.

Concurrently, bilateral cooperation and interaction continued to advance, propelled by the diversification and institutionalization of multifaceted relations across political, economic, security, and cultural domains. These developments functioned as a mutually reinforcing mechanism, facilitating coordinated action and underpinning the sustained growth, resilience, and long-term development of Franco-Turkish relations.

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<sup>44</sup> Mai 2012: Proclamation des résultats de l'élection présidentielle et durée des mandats, <https://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/election-presidentielle-2012/mai-2012-proclamation-des-resultats-de-l-election-presidentielle-et-duree-des-mandats> (accessed May 11, 2025).

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The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

### **Ethical Standards**

The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.

## ARMENIAN VOICES IN TURKISH BESTSELLERS: CASE STUDY OF AHMET ÜMIT'S NOVEL "FAREWELL, MY BEAUTIFUL HOMELAND"

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### Abstract

Over the past thirty years, the dissolution of boundaries between high literature and mass-market fiction has given rise to a unique "middle-class" prose in Türkiye. Detective writer and journalist Ahmet Ümit is widely regarded as one of the leading figures of this literary trend. This article examines how the Armenian theme is reflected in one of A. Ümit's most popular detective novels "Farewell, My Beautiful Homeland" (2015). In the novel, author portrays the formation, development, and eventual decline of the Young Turks Movement within the broader context of early 20th-century Ottoman life, seeking to understand the causes of the Empire's collapse. Among the many issues A. Ümit addresses are the Armenian Genocide and mass deportations, presented, however, not in his own voice, but through the words of one of the characters of the novel – Arshak Boghossyan.

**Keywords:** *Modern Fiction, Turkish Prose, Ahmet Ümit, Young Turks, Continuity, Armenians in Türkiye, Armenian Genocide.*

### "Oppositional" detective writer in Erdoğan's Türkiye: Ahmet Ümit

In Türkiye, a distinctive "middle-class" prose has emerged over the past two-three decades, shaped by the dissolution of boundaries between high literature and mass-market bestseller fiction, and by the decrease in their polarization. While falling short of the standards of high literature in terms of artistry, these novels serve as effective instruments for disseminating the ideological approaches of both the government and the opposition to broad layers of society. These books typically sell millions of copies and sometimes raise unexpected themes and historical events that have long been considered taboo in Türkiye. Ahmet Ümit is regarded as one of the

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most prominent figures of abovementioned “middle-class literature.” Born in 1960 in the city Gaziantep, Ahmet Ümit was actively involved in left-wing activities, first in his hometown and later in Istanbul. In the late 1980s, as a representative of the Turkish leftist movement, he spent more than 5 years in Moscow. A. Ümit’s literary career began in 1996 with the novel *“The Fog and the Night”*<sup>1</sup>. His works have since been translated into 23 languages, including Armenian<sup>2</sup>.

The peculiarity of his novels, primarily written in the detective genre, lies in their historical references to civilizations and peoples who once inhabited the territory of present-day Türkiye, including the Hittites, Romans, Armenians, and Greeks. Moreover, not only does Ümit present the inseparability of the connection between the present and the past but unlike the writers sponsored by the Erdoğan regime, he, as emphasised by the Russian literary critic Maria Repenkova, seeks to offer an alternative reading of Türkiye’s history, countering the tendency of writers like İskender Pala, Nazan Bekiroğlu and Nuriye Akman to select, interpret and mythologise history in a biased manner<sup>3</sup>.

Ahmet Ümit’s literary approaches are deeply connected to his critical stance against Erdoğan’s regime that he openly declares in his interviews. Speaking to “İIndependent Türkçe” back in 2019, A. Ümit stated that when the Justice and Development Party came to power, it was a project of the opponents of the ideology of the republic, a movement that united society, a moderate Islamic-democratic movement, but over time it transformed into a totalitarian structure: “In seventeen years, there has been no serious achievement, no success. There is destruction everywhere. That is why something new is about to begin. Former members of the AKP have started to establish new parties. Moreover, the AKP lost power in major cities like Istanbul and Ankara. This is the messenger of change”<sup>4</sup>. In another interview, comparing the situation in Türkiye after the coup of September

<sup>1</sup> Find more details about Ahmet Ümit’s biography on the writer’s official website <https://www.ahmetumit.com/biyografi.php> (accessed 15.09.2025).

<sup>2</sup> Umit, Ahmet, *Stambuli hushê* [Ümit Ahmet, A Memento for Istanbul], Yerevan, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Repenkova Maria, *Istoričeskij roman Ahmeta Umita – etap v razvitii sovremennoj tureckoj belletristiki, Filologičeskie nauki. Voprosy teorii i praktiki* [ Repenkova Maria Ahmet Ümit’s historical novel – a stage in the development of contemporary Turkish fiction, Philological Sciences. Questions of Theory and Practice], *Gramota*, 9(87), p. 2, Tambov, pp. 290-297, [https://www.gramota.net/articles/issn\\_1997-2911\\_2018\\_9-2\\_17.pdf](https://www.gramota.net/articles/issn_1997-2911_2018_9-2_17.pdf) (accessed 16.07.2025).

<sup>4</sup> Ahmet Ümit Independent Türkçe’ye konuştu: Cumhuriyet kuruldu ama kul kültürü yıkılmadı <https://www.indyturk.com/node/107056/r%C3%B6portaj/ahmet-%C3%BCmit-independent-t%C3%BCrk%C3%A7e%E2%80%99ye-konu%C5%9Ftu-cumhuriyet-kuruldu-ama-kul-k%C3%BClt%C3%BCr%C3%BC-y%C3%BCk%C3%BCld%C3%BC> (accessed 17.07.2025)



12, 1980, with the modernity, the author noted that Turkish society was witnessing manifestations of fascism from one party. He mentioned, "Perhaps, unlike in the old days, there are no tortures in prisons, people are not killed in prisons, but there are still, for example, certain suspicious deaths. On the other hand, when the army was staging a coup, there was no fear of division because the army belonged to everyone, but in the case of the current party fascism, the risk of internal division is high. on many issues, we are already divided"<sup>5</sup>. Highly criticizing Türkiye's current political situation Ahmet Ümit puts forward the metaphor of "killing the father": "We perceive state officials as fathers. In the Ottoman times, the father was the sultan. Then Atatürk came, and we had a father again. İsmet İnönü, Adnan Menderes, Süleyman Demirel who was directly nicknamed as "*baba* [father in Turkish- N. P.]", and now Tayyip Erdoğan... [In my novels] killing the father means settling accounts with the past, looking towards the future. We have never done anything like this before, neither in real life nor in literature"<sup>6</sup>. Ahmet Ümit links the constant search for "a father or supporter/protector" with the "slavery mindset" of the whole Turkish society. Reflecting on Türkiye's historical path, A. Ümit noted: "The French Revolution came from below. Our society does not have such a desire. Here, intellectuals want to stage a coup in the name of the people. This means that perhaps the people are hopeless, but they do not go and say, 'Enough, brother, let's rise against the padişah'. One thing that does not change in these lands is the culture of slavery"<sup>7</sup>. In this context, examining the continuity between Ottoman Empire and Republican Türkiye, Ahmet Ümit views the Kemalist movement not as an isolated, distinct phenomenon, but as a product of the Abdul Hamid II's and the Young Turks' policies. In an interview with the "Cumhuriyet" newspaper, Ahmet Ümit stated: " Ultimately, the reason for the establishment of the current republic was the Committee of Union and Progress. This is a very important observation. Mustafa Kemal, İsmet İnönü, Celal Bayar: all of the figures who played a part in proclamation of the republic were Ittihadists. For many decades, it is always said that the first parliament was established on April 23, 1920. No, the first, albeit short-lived parliament, opened in 1876. And for the second time parliament was opened on July 23, 1908. Therefore, the

<sup>5</sup> Yazar Ahmet Ümit: Bazen sansürlüyorum, [https://www.istanbulgercegi.com/yazar-ahmet-umit-bazen-sansurluyorum\\_114565.html](https://www.istanbulgercegi.com/yazar-ahmet-umit-bazen-sansurluyorum_114565.html) (accessed 17.07.2025)

<sup>6</sup> Ahmet Ümit: "Toplum olarak babayı öldürecek olgunluğa henüz gelmedik", <https://egoistokur.com/freuddan-fatih-sultan-mehmede-psikanaliz/> (accessed 17.07.2025)

<sup>7</sup> "Bu kitabı yazdığım için çok mutluyum" <https://t24.com.tr/k24/yazi/ahmet-umit,493> (accessed 17.07.2025)

republic was established on the basis of the collectivity coming from those times, it did not arise suddenly... in reality...Mustafa Kemal is also one who comes from Union and Progress<sup>8</sup>, received his education there, and shaped his political orientation there"<sup>9</sup>. In his novel "Farewell, my beautiful homeland" (2015)<sup>10</sup>

Ahmet Ümit depicts a comprehensive picture of the Young Turk movement's origins, development, initial victories, and the decisions that ultimately led to the empire's collapse after World War I, while also revealing the behind-the-scenes activities of several Young Turk figures during the early years of the republic.

### **"Farewell, my beautiful homeland": A Detective Chronicle from Empire to Republic**

As we have already mentioned, Ahmet Ümit's detectives often connect modern and historical periods, shedding light on the various civilizations that once inhabited the territories of modern Türkiye. From this point of view, "Farewell, my beautiful homeland" stands apart as it portrays the last two decades of the Ottoman Empire and has no connections to the present day.<sup>11</sup> The novel summarizes the findings of three years of historical research and fieldwork carried out in Thessaloniki and Paris. The narrative

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<sup>8</sup> To better understand the ideological continuity between the İttihadists and the Kemalists, and the consistency of the ruling elite's policies beneath the guise of radical change from the empire's fall to the mid-20th century one can look to memoirs written by a founding member of the Union and Progress Committee and later in the republican period a deputy in the Turkish Grand National Assembly Midhat Şükrü Bleda (1874–1956). In the book entitled "The Collapse of the Empire" Bleda writes that once he travels to Bursa to treat his rheumatism. In the garden of the Gönül Ferat hotel, a young man approaches him and introduces himself as Mahmud Celal, a member of the [Union and Progress] Committee's Bursa branch. Impressed by their conversation, Bleda, upon returning to Istanbul, intervened to have him appointed chief secretary in Izmir. As the narrative later reveals, this young man was none other than Celal Bayar, the third president of the Republic of Turkey and earlier prime minister during Atatürk's time. It is noteworthy that Bayar considered himself a student of Bleda. Midhat Şükrü recalled: "When Atatürk appointed him prime minister, I was the deputy of Sivas. After his speech presenting the government's first program to the Assembly, he came down, approached me, and whispered in my ear, 'Are you satisfied with your student?'" Bleda, Midhat Şükrü, *İmparatorluğun çöküşü*, İstanbul, 1973, s.54-56.

<sup>9</sup> "İttihat ve Terakki'nin fotoğrafını çekmek istedim", 04.12.2015 <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/ittihat-ve-terakkinin-fotografini-cekme-istedim-442317> (accessed 16.07.2025)

<sup>10</sup> Ümit Ahmet, *Elveda güzel vatanım*, İstanbul, 2015. The novel is dedicated to the memory of the victims of the two explosions that occurred on October 10, 2015 during a peaceful demonstration of civil society organizations in Ankara.

<sup>11</sup> Hepimiz aynı yerdeyiz Türkiye yoksa biz de yokuz!, <https://www.sabah.com.tr/magazin/2018/07/09/ahmet-umit-hepimiz-ayni-yerdeyiz-turkiye-yoksa-biz-de-yokuz?paging=3> (accessed 19.08.2025)

unfolds in 1926, after the assassination attempt on Mustafa Kemal in Izmir.<sup>12</sup> In its aftermath, former Ittihadist members face persecution, and a prominent figure, Şehsuvar Sami hides in Istanbul's Pera Palace Hotel and decides to write letters to his beloved Esther who lives in Paris. In these letters which he never sent to Esther, Şehsuvar gradually reveals the true intentions and motivations of those who had followed him from the beginning of the story, while also presenting the last twenty years of Ottoman-Turkish history. As a participant and eyewitness to the dramatic historical events of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Şehsuvar attempts to evaluate his own life within their context, framing it through the chain of "patriotism–love–duty–treason." As the Russian Turkologist Larisa Sofronova rightly emphasizes, "although the novel is historical, its central theme is not tied to historical events but to the problem of personal moral choice."<sup>13</sup> Using Şehsuvar's letters, the author seeks the initial conditions for the Young Turk movement's success in the failures of Abdulhamid's government. At the same time, by portraying both the human and political dimensions of the Young Turk leaders, he highlights the errors that ultimately led to the state's downfall. Şehsuvar presents a positive portrayal of his immediate superior, Taleat: "I have never doubted Taleat's sincerity and faith". At the same time, he asks Esther a rhetorical question: "In your opinion, are sincerity and faith enough to govern a country?"<sup>14</sup> Enver emerges as the most negatively drawn figure among the Young Turks. Even after the disastrous defeat at Sarıkamış, his influence was so big that cargo arriving from Germany to the Ottoman Empire bore the label "Enverland."<sup>15</sup> To his associates, he seemed more a dreamer than a realist. With humor, Ümit recounts his marriage to Naciye Sultan through the voice of Taleat Pasha: "Our Enver is a strange man; he fell in love with Naciye Sultan, whom he has never seen, knowing her only from his mother's description. As in politics, in matters of love he continues to pursue not reality, but dreams."<sup>16</sup> Şehsuvar's letters also address the question of whether the Young Turk

<sup>12</sup> On June 14, 1926, a group of former ministers, deputies, and governors planned an assassination attempt against Atatürk in the Kemeraltı district of Izmir. While in Balıkesir, Mustafa Kemal received a telegram revealing the plot. As a result, several former high-ranking officials, including Dr. Nazım, were arrested and subsequently executed. For more details see Müezzinoğlu E., İzmir Suikastı ve Ahmet Şükrü Bey, *International Journal of Social Science*, 2015, N: 38, p. 155-176.

<sup>13</sup> Sofronova Larisa, O romane Ahmeta Umita «Proshhaj, moja prekrasnaja rodina» [About the novel "Farewel, my beautiful homeland by Ahmet Ümit"], *Vostochnyj al'manah, obshh. red. T. A. Zakaurcevoj*, Moskva, 2017. s. 157-169.

<sup>14</sup> Elveda güzel vatanım, s. 396

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 417

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 411

regime's decision to enter World War I, ultimately fatal to the Ottoman Empire, was right or wrong. Notably, according to the narrative, Taleat at first resisted the war, but abandoned by Britain, France, and Russia, was driven into alliance with Germany<sup>17</sup>. Şehsuvar writes to Esther: "Entering the war was like a card game, and the chances of winning were very slim."

<sup>18</sup> Yet the letters also show how each leader had his own motives: for Enver, the war was an opportunity to realize Pan-Turkist ideas, while Cemal Pasha justified Türkiye's entry by saying, "We entered the war so that we could pay wages. The treasury was completely empty; we had no money to buy bread for the army. The Germans, who knew our situation better than us, offered an alliance, and we agreed."<sup>19</sup> Summarizing the history of the Young Turk leaders, Şehsuvar reflects on the Young Turk leaders: "They betrayed both their ideals and their history. Therefore, neither the people nor history will forgive them."<sup>20</sup> Şehsuvar considers Abdulhamid's death and Taleat's departure from Türkiye in 1918 to mark the end of an era, while emphasizing that the ideas of Taleat, Enver, and Cemal endured within the republic. In his letters he reflects: "The revolution was carried out in 1908. That parliament, as you very well know, was established not on April 23, 1920, but on December 17, 1908. Yet no one wants to remember that. Everyone acts as if the struggle for country's freedom began in 1919. The 30-year fight against the heartless oppression of dictatorship, those who died for it, those who rotted in prisons and exile seem to have been forgotten. And yet, the roots of the liberation struggle lie there."<sup>21</sup>

Ahmed Ümit's reflections, voiced through his hero Şehsuvar on the complex and ambiguous period of Ottoman history, were naturally not unequivocally accepted by Turkish literary scholars and critics. In his review, Sevim Kahraman accuses Ahmet Ümit of diminishing the role of the Ittihadist revolution, branding the novel regressive and of poor quality.<sup>22</sup> A. Sadık Albayrak echoes this opinion, harshly criticizing both novel's artistic value and historical accuracy, and dismissing it as a choice for

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 415

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 416

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 470

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 449

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 83

<sup>22</sup> Kahraman S., *Elveda Edebiyat, Elveda Devrim – I* <http://www.yenidenatilim.com/elveda-edebiyat-elveda-devrim-i-sevim-kahraman/1675/> (accessed 17.07.2025), the second part of it - Kahraman S. *Elveda Edebiyat, Elveda Devrim – II* <http://www.abcgazetesi.com/arsiv/elvedaedebiyat-elveda-devrim-ii/haber-18501> (accessed 17.07.2025)

readers without historical awareness or aesthetic sensibility.<sup>23</sup> In contrast, Professor Mustafa Gençeri finds the novel interesting and useful for contemporary readers, arguing that it allows one to reimagine the cultural landscape of the Ottoman and early Turkish Republic while addressing themes neglected for decades.<sup>24</sup> Finally, A. Yackley observes that the novel's depiction of rising authoritarianism and restrictions on free expression runs like a red thread—highly relevant to today's Türkiye.<sup>25</sup>

### **“Forgotten” heroes of the Era: Armenian Genocide in the “Farewell, my beautiful homeland”**

Depicting Türkiye's external and internal problems in the context of the First World War Ahmet Ümit, with his leftist liberal views, does not shy away from addressing the issue of the Armenian Genocide—long treated as taboo by state propaganda.

Since the early 1990s, sweeping changes in Türkiye, the region, and the wider world have inevitably left their mark on literature and affected thematic choices of the Turkish authors. Armenia's independence, the growing international recognition of the Genocide, the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi AKP in Turkish) government's “Zero Problems with Neighbors” policy and later “Armenian Reform” initiatives after 2002, and—last but not least—the rapid acceleration of information flows that made taboos harder to sustain were among the main factors bringing Armenian subject into Turkish fiction in the last decade of the XX century and early XXI century.

In earlier phases, authors' approaches were largely uniform due to the constraints of their time. Today, however, we encounter a wide range of interpretations of the theme. Many works still deny the reality of the Genocide, portraying Armenians as murderers and embodiments of cruelty.<sup>26</sup> In such novels, Turks appear as innocent victims and sufferers, while Armenians are depicted as cruel, evil, and aggressive. Moreover,

<sup>23</sup> Albayrak B. S., Ahmet Ümit'in Gecikmiş Elveda'sı-2 <https://ilerihaber.org/yazar/ahmet-umitin-gecikmis-elvedasi-2-55802.html>, Part 1 Albayrak B. S. Ahmet Ümit'in Gecikmiş Elveda'sı-2, <http://ilerihaber.org/yazar/ahmetumitin-gecikmis-elvedasi-1-55537.html> (accessed 18.05.2025)

<sup>24</sup> See the full review Gençeri M. Elveda Güzel Vatanım: Devletin derinlikleri, toprağın derinliklerinden daha karanlıktır // Tarih Kritik. 2017. № 3 (1). S. 131-146. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/266961> (accessed 17.07.2024)

<sup>25</sup> Yackley A. J., In historical fiction, top-selling Turkish writer offers modern critique”, <http://www.reuters.com/article/usturkey-writer-idUSKCN0X41UX> (accessed 17.07.2024)

<sup>26</sup> See for example Uzunaylalı Taleat, Paylaşılamayan Topraklar, İstanbul, 2015; Gündüz Tufan, Nisanın iki günü, İstanbul, 2015; Eyup Altun, Sona, İstanbul, 2015.

admissions of Armenian cruelty are often voiced by Armenian characters themselves, a technique meant to lend credibility to the narrative.

Meanwhile, the number of authors who create relatively realistic depictions of the genocide and adopt an empathetic or at least neutral attitude toward Armenians is increasing.<sup>27</sup> Notably, when addressing the genocide, Turkish writers tend to avoid speaking in their own voice as narrators, instead presenting the theme through the words of their characters. They also refrain from explicit evaluations or commentary, leaving readers to draw their own conclusions from the episodes depicted. Ahmet Ümit is among this group of authors. In *Farewell, My Beautiful Homeland*, the Armenian theme is explored through the meeting of the main character Şehsuvar with his classmate Arshak Poghosyan, who, according to the plot, has returned to Istanbul from Paris in 1926.

Originally from Sebastia (Sivas), Arshak is described by Şehsuvar as lazy yet intelligent and kind. His family's vast estates gave him access to luxuries far beyond Şehsuvar's means. This detail underscores the economic motives behind the Genocide. Like countless Armenians, Arshak's family was driven from their homeland in Sebastia and ultimately perished. Interestingly, when quoting Arshak's words in his letter to Esther, Şehsuvar offers brief explanations about the events of 1915, noting that the decision to exile Armenians was taken on the advice of the German General Staff following the defeat at Sarıkamış. He wrote to Esther that, although he knew of the massacre of tens of thousands of Armenians, he pretended ignorance and asked: "How, how did this misfortune happen?" The letter continues with Arshak's words: "A look of disbelief appeared on his face, saying, 'As if you don't know that they died during the deportation from Sivas to Lebanon.' When Şehsuvar insists that he would have tried to help had he known, Arshak replies: 'Whom would you save, Şehsuvar? We were a family of two hundred... No, Şehsuvar, you couldn't save anyone.' Ironically, Arshak survived because he had volunteered for service in the Dardanelles. Şehsuvar quotes his friend's words: "...I was worried that I hadn't received a letter since April, but I thought—it's war, I was worried that my family would think I was dead, while my family had died. Everyone, Şehsuvar, everyone—from my grandfather Apik to my youngest cousin Vache. I couldn't find anyone, neither them nor their graves. Yes, I found out after being demobilized, I returned home to Sivas. Have you ever seen a village where there are no people at all? Have you ever heard the

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<sup>27</sup> See for example Korat Gürcel, *Unutkan ayna*, İstanbul, 2019; Aydın Seyfullah, *Gri zaman*, İstanbul, 2017. Kutlu Ayla, *Bir göçmen kuştı O*, İstanbul, 2008.

deafening silence? Have you ever witnessed how the sweetest memories of childhood turn into nightmare? I have experienced all of that, Şehsuvar. Why, I ask myself, why was my family killed? You might say that it was wartime conditions, that some Armenian rebels collaborated with the Russians. I know that our people, like the Greeks and Bulgarians, wanted to create their own state. I know that the Ottoman Empire wanted to secure itself, but was it necessary for so many people to die? Was it necessary to take so many lives, shed so much blood, inflict so much pain, so much persecution, injustice, suffering. These lands are cursed, Şehsuvar, as if they were watered not with water, but with blood. as if not the sun, but a wild light illuminates our days. as if not milk from the breasts of our mothers, but anger, so merciless, so harsh, so pitiless, came to us. "I cannot explain these massacres, this ruthlessness, this cruelty in any other way."<sup>28</sup> Arshak also notes that he found the place of his relatives' murder in Malatya, in a place called Çelebi: "It turns out that they killed my relatives. They gathered the men, took them to the top of the mountains, attacked them with knives, axes, hatchets, everything, threw their bodies off the mountain so that they would become food for wolves and birds. I found no trace of our people, Şehsuvar."<sup>29</sup>

After presenting Arshak's story, however, the author shifts focus away from the Genocide, turning instead to detailed descriptions of other events.

## Conclusion

The early 21st century was marked by the rise of Turkish "middle-class fiction", whose representatives became widely known both inside and outside the country. One of the most prominent modern Turkish authors, Ahmet Ümit, addresses some of the most difficult problems of contemporary Turkish society, often criticizing the policies and decisions of the ruling authorities. Following the trend of discussing themes that had been taboo for many decades, Ümit speaks about the Armenian Genocide in one of his most notable historical detective novels, *Farewell, My Beautiful Homeland*. In this book, the Armenian Genocide appears among several non-central, peripheral issues. Although the theme is discussed in fewer than ten pages, within a single dialogue between two characters Şehsuvar Sami and his classmate from Sivas, Arshak Boghossian, Ümit manages to reflect on its key dimensions. In this relatively short passage, readers find hints about the prosperous financial situation of Armenians before the war

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p. 461-466

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

and the inevitable envy of Turks toward them. Through the thoughts of Şahsuvar, it becomes clear that despite their wealth, Armenians were not treated as equal citizens in the Ottoman Empire. The dialogue also reveals the deportations, violence, and murders of entire families. Despite depicting these scenes, Ümit as narrator refrains from expressing any direct opinion or commentary, leaving readers to reflect on the Armenian Genocide and draw their own conclusions.

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The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

### **Ethical Standards**

The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.

## THE PERPETUATION OF STATE VIOLENCE: THE TURKISH ARMY'S INSTITUTIONAL ROLE IN THE MASSACRES OF ARMENIANS IN KARS AND SHIRAK PROVINCES (1920) AS A MANIFESTATION OF GENOCIDAL CONTINUITY

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### Abstract

The Ottoman army consistently played a distinct role in the implementation of the Turkish authorities' premeditated genocidal policy against Armenians. Units of the regular Turkish army participated in the forced deportations of Armenians, the destruction of settlements, and mass killings. The Young Turks' policy, guided by Pan-Turkist ideology, aimed not only to annihilate the Armenian people within the borders of the Ottoman Empire but also to eliminate any manifestation of Armenian statehood. This political line was also continued by the Kemalists. The massacres in the Vanand (Kars) and Shirak provinces of the Republic of Armenia in 1920 demonstrate that the violence against Armenians was not limited solely to the years of the Genocide but continued as a perpetuation of the same ideology. Therefore, the actions of the Young Turk and Kemalist authorities against Armenians should be examined not as isolated episodes but within the context of different stages of the same program and ideology. The article demonstrates this connection through the study of archival, field research, and specialized materials. The purpose of the article is to analyze the Turkish authorities' continuous pattern of involving the army in the process of carrying out massacres against Armenians, exemplified by the provinces of Kars and Shirak.

**Keywords:** *Vanand (Kars), Shirak, Armenians, Ottoman army, Turkish authorities, Pan-Turkist ideology.*

### Introduction

The political events of 1920 became a pivotal stage for Armenia and the entire region. Amidst the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the newly forming Turkish authorities, facing external and internal challenges, sustained the logic of the coercive policy applied against the Armenian people. The involvement of the

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Turkish army in the mass massacres of Armenians was not an isolated phenomenon; rather, it reflected the state's consistent and systemic approach of utilizing its military structures as a tool for national and religious cleansing.

The Genocide perpetrated by the Young Turk regime during the First World War, which aimed at the complete extermination of the Armenian population, was reformulated by the Kemalist authorities in 1920 into a new political policy. Although the Kemalist movement was being formed as a national-liberation struggle and a movement directed against external powers, its domestic policy continued the same ideological and practical line, which was aimed at the physical destruction of Armenians and other non-Turkic elements.

The examples of the Kars and Shirak provinces attest that the actions of the Turkish army in the autumn of 1920 were not merely within the scope of military operations, but possessed a planned character. The violence, massacres, and deportations carried out in these regions indicate a high degree of state structures' involvement and the fact that the Kemalist leadership, like its Young Turk predecessors, purposefully utilized the army as the principal instrument of its genocidal policy. Numerous facts have been known since the time of the massacres of Armenians organized by Sultan Abdul Hamid II, attesting that the Turkish army was the most crucial force in the annihilation of Armenians.<sup>1</sup>

### **Attempts by the Young Turk Government to Involve the Army in the Massacres of Armenians**

The armed forces of the Ottoman Empire were also used against Armenians by the Young Turks. Deep within the Ottoman Empire, Turkish military units and formations, in close cooperation with the police and Kurdish bandit groups, directly participated in the massacres of Armenians. In all instances of massacres and looting that occurred in the Adana province in 1909, soldiers participated very actively, a fact confirmed by hundreds of witnesses and the Adana Investigation Commission.<sup>2</sup>

Ten days after the first Adana massacres (April 1-4, 1909), three regiments of the Army of Liberty from Thessaloniki entered the city and were stationed on the heights dominating the Armenian quarters. Executing the directives of the Young Turk central committee, the soldiers set fire to the remaining Armenian homes and hospitals, massacring women and children. The Minister of Interior, Hacı Adil, had instructed them to 'spare the foreigners,' implying that the Armenians were

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<sup>1</sup> M. Nersisyan, *Hayots' tseghaspanut'yan anherk'eli p'astat'gher* [Irrefutable Documents on the Armenian Genocide] (Yerevan: Gitutyun, 2005), 64-67.

<sup>2</sup> M. Nersisyan and R. Sahakyan, *Hayeri tseghaspanutyunë Osmanyany kaysrut'yunum* [The Genocide of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire] (Yerevan: Hayastan, 1991), 231, 235, 236, 250, R. Sahakyan and K. Khudaverdyan, *Hayots' ts'eghaspanutyunë tasnamyakneri luysi nerk'o* [The Armenian Genocide in the Light of Decades] (Yerevan, 1995), 17-18.

effectively to be slaughtered. The task left unfinished by the local Muslim population was continued by the soldiers<sup>3</sup>.

Supported by the newly arrived army units, the Turks attacked the completely unarmed and defenseless Armenians, mercilessly killing and burning thousands of people alive.<sup>4</sup>

The units of the 3rd Nizam Corps that arrived in Mersin, which were entirely under the command of Young Turk officers, committed similar atrocities in the provinces of Aleppo and Adana, where many settlements were set ablaze, and the population was literally slaughtered.<sup>5</sup>

On July 15, 1909, Major-General Yudenich, the temporary chief of staff of the Caucasus Military District, noted in his report that as of June 1909, three-quarters of Adana no longer existed; only the Muslim quarters adjacent to the Seyhan River remained intact. The rest of the city (approximately 5 – 6 thousand homes) was a pile of ruins. He then continues: The true culprits and murderers – the authorities and the Macedonian [Young Turk] troops – do not even think of hiding; they have no need to, as they themselves are members of the military tribunals and the investigative commission, and they themselves are now maintaining order in the country where 25–30 thousand Christians were slaughtered by their own hands.<sup>6</sup>

Entering the First World War, the governing circles of the Ottoman Empire hoped to realize the long-held ambition of removing Russia from the Caucasus and creating a Greater Turan by uniting the Turkic-speaking populations of the Near East, the Caucasus, Russia, and Central Asia. On the path to achieving this objective, the obstacle was not only Russia but also the Armenian people, who inhabited the eastern and western sections of Armenia.<sup>7</sup>

In 1915, the population in certain Armenian settlements of the Ottoman Empire, anticipating the threat of massacre, defied the order for forced deportation. Recognizing that the government would not leave them unpunished, they were compelled to resort to self-defense. Against the Armenian settlements that refused the deportation order, the government dispatched army units, gendarmerie formations, and irregular armed groups of the ‘Special Organization,’ which, along with the local Muslim population, carried out the massacres of the Armenians.

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<sup>3</sup> S. Poghosyan, *Hayots’ ts’eghaspanut’yan patmut’yun* [History of the Armenian Genocide]: Vol. 2 (Yerevan: Hayastan, 2009), 136.

<sup>4</sup> Vahakn Dadrian, *Istoriya armjanskogo genocida* [The History of the Armenian Genocide] (Yerevan, 2007), 234.

<sup>5</sup> M. Nersisyan and R. Sahakyan, *Hayeri tseghaspanutyunē Osmanyany kaysrut’yunum* [The Genocide of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire], 236.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 236-237.

<sup>7</sup> A. Kirakosyan, *Haykakan harts’i ev Hayots’ ts’eghaspanut’yan hamar’ot patmut’yun* [A Brief History of the Armenian Question and the Armenian Genocide] (Yerevan: Tigran Mets, 2015), 15.

Units of the Ottoman army were involved in carrying out the massacres of the Armenian population in the zone adjacent to the Russian-Turkish Caucasian front, particularly in Van, Bitlis, and Mush.<sup>8</sup>

Following the self-defense of Van in April-May 1915, and the subsequent entry of Russian forces and Armenian volunteers into the city, the Ottoman army retreated, carrying out massacres in the Armenian settlements encountered along its route. Although gendarmerie units, irregular Kurdish armed groups, and gangs from the 'Special Organization' had been allocated to suppress Armenian resistance in cases of non-compliance with the deportation order, it still proved necessary to involve army units in the perpetration of the massacres. Shortly after the defense of Van, the inhabitants of Bitlis and Mush were slaughtered by certain military units stationed there<sup>9</sup>.

The German officer H. Fierbühler noted that in Van, Turkish troops under the command of Jevdet Bey devastated more than 200 villages and massacred 26,000 inhabitants.<sup>10</sup>

Subsequently, the armed forces led by Halil and Jevdet Beys collectively organized the massacre of the Armenian population in Sghert, Bitlis, and Mush.<sup>11</sup>

The retreating Turkish army, entering the districts of Mush and Bulanık, joined Musa Bey's Hamidiye forces and ruthlessly massacred and devastated the Armenian villages in those districts. Subsequently, uniting with Kurdish tribes, they carried out a horrific massacre in approximately 30 Armenian-inhabited villages of the Hınıs district.<sup>12</sup>

In this manner, the Ottoman government carried out the suppression of self-defense movements in Armenian settlements that had defied the 1915 forced deportation orders, resulting in the extermination of the Armenian population, by involving army units in this effort. The government dispatched army units for these aforementioned operations in cases where the forces of the gendarmerie and armed formations were insufficient.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> A. Basentsyan, 'Osmanyanyan banaki ev ayl zinvað kazmavorumneri koğmic' hayeri ink'napaştpanut'yan ĉ'nşumn u haykakan bnakavayreri voč'nič'ats'umě [Suppression of Armenian Self-Defense and Destruction of Armenian Settlements by the Ottoman Army and Other Armed Formations], *K'ant'eg* 2 (2018), 107.

<sup>9</sup> Taner Akçam, *A Shameful Act, The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility* (N.Y., Metropolitan Books, 2006), 171.

<sup>10</sup> H. Vierbücher, *What the German Imperial Government concealed from its Subjects: Armenia 1915: The Slaughter of a civilized People at the Hands of the Turks* (Arlington, 2006), 57.

<sup>11</sup> Basentsyan, 'Osmanyanyan banaki ev ayl zinvað kazmavorumneri koğmic' hayeri ink'napaştpanut'yan ĉ'nşumn u haykakan bnakavayreri voč'nič'ats'umě [Suppression of Armenian Self-Defense and Destruction of Armenian Settlements by the Ottoman Army and Other Armed Formations], 108.

<sup>12</sup> A. Basentsyan, 'Hayeri k'otorač'nery Bit'lisi nahanğum osmanyanyan banaki ev ayl zinvað kazmavorumneri koğmic' (1915 t'.) [The Massacres of Armenians in the Bitlis Province by the Ottoman Army and Other Armed Formations (1915)], *Lraper hasarakakan gitut'yunneri* 1 (2018): 14.

<sup>13</sup> Basentsyan, 'Osmanyanyan banaki ev ayl zinvað kazmavorumneri koğmic' hayeri ink'napaştpanut'yan ĉ'nşumn u haykakan bnakavayreri voč'nič'ats'umě [Suppression of Armenian

Subsequently, Turkish judicial bodies, aiming to evade state responsibility, assigned responsibility for the atrocities committed against the Armenians to the 'Committee of Union and Progress' (CUP) party and the 'Special Organization' operating under its command, without uttering a single word regarding the brutalities of the Ottoman army, which was a state institution.<sup>14</sup>

The army's role in the massacres of the Armenian population continued during the Turkish military campaigns into Eastern Armenia in 1918 and 1920. The Turkish army not only engaged in warfare against Armenian armed forces but concurrently carried out the extermination of a segment of the East Armenian population and Western Armenian refugees. Following the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on March 3, 1918, Soviet Russia ceded the Kars province to the Ottoman Empire. By seizing Kars and the surrounding villages in late April 1918, Turkish troops massacred thousands of Armenians.<sup>15</sup> In the provinces (districts) of Kars, Kaghzvan, and Ardahan, 117 Armenian villages were devastated.<sup>16</sup>

The entire Christian population of Kars province, approximately 190,000 people, abandoned their homes, compelled by the threat of Turkish massacre. Around 120,000 Armenians were left homeless, a portion of whom died from starvation and disease. Hundreds of thousands of people migrated to the districts of Alexandropol, Etchmiadzin, and Yerevan.<sup>17</sup>

According to the testimony of one eyewitness from the Ardahan region, the Turks looted several thousand women and children, stripping them even of their underwear, and subsequently dispatched them to Akhalkalak. They marched for one month, suffering from cold and hunger.<sup>18</sup> While the Transcaucasian government had resumed the interrupted Trebizond negotiations in Batumi on May 11, 1918, Turkish troops launched an attack on Alexandropol in the early morning of May 15 and captured the city. Taken by surprise, the population of Alexandropol fled in the direction of Karakilisa. This event was reported to the Catholicos of All Armenians, George V, by the Prelate Vicar of the Alexandropol Diocese, Archimandrite Artak. In the span of one hour, virtually the entire city was evacuated.<sup>19</sup>

According to eyewitness testimony, approximately 200,000 people had amassed in the Pambak region on the eve of the Turkish invasion (9,000 from Basen, 4,000

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Self-Defense and Destruction of Armenian Settlements by the Ottoman Army and Other Armed Formations'], 113.

<sup>14</sup> Basentsyan, 'Hayeri k'otorač'nery Bit'lisi nahangum osmanyanyan banaki ev ayl zinvað kazmavorunneri kogmic' (1915 t'.) [The Massacres of Armenians in the Bitlis Province by the Ottoman Army and Other Armed Formations (1915)], 12.

<sup>15</sup> A. Poghosyan, Soc'ial-tntesakan haraberut'yunnerë Karsi marzum, 1878-1920 [Social-Economic Relations in the Kars Region, 1878-1920] (Yerevan: Haypet'hrat, 1961), 295-296, 307-308.

<sup>16</sup> M. Karapetyan, Hayastani Hanrapetut'yan banakë (1918-1920) [The Army of the Republic of Armenia, 1918-1920] (Yerevan: Gitutyun, 1996), 94.

<sup>17</sup> A. Poghosyan, Karskaya oblast' v sostave Rossii [Kars Region as Part of Russia] (Yerevan, 1983), 213, 214, 222, Poghosyan, Soc'ial-tntesakan haraberut'yunnerë Karsi marzum, 1878-1920 [Social-Economic Relations in the Kars Region, 1878-1920], 309.

<sup>18</sup> Poghosyan, Karskaya oblast' v sostave Rossii [Kars Region as Part of Russia], 222.

<sup>19</sup> National Archives of Armenia (NAA), F. 57, Inv. 5, C. 178, Sh. 10.

from Kaghzvan, over 60,000 from the Kars region, and over 70,000 from the city of Alexandropol and the villages of Eastern Shirak). This was a colossal mass of people, occupying the stretch from Ghaltakhchi to Mets Karakilisa, a distance of about 40 versts (42.5 km).<sup>20</sup>

According to official statistics, from May 15 to December, 10,300 people in 122 villages of the Alexandropol district (excluding the district center) perished due to Turkish atrocities. This toll includes 5,086 massacred, 4,660 taken captive, and 483 who went missing. Of those taken captive, 257 returned, the majority of whom died within a few days due to extreme exhaustion.<sup>21</sup>

These data, published in the *Harach* daily newspaper in October 1919 under the editorship and with commentaries by Hakob Ter-Hakobyan (Irazek), a deputy of the Armenian Parliament, were considered to be reduced by almost three times according to G. Khoyetsyan, the diplomatic representative of the Republic of Armenia (RA) in Alexandropol. Already in his reports submitted to the RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs in early October 1918, Khoyetsyan wrote that in Alexandropol city and the villages of Eastern Shirak alone, the Turks had massacred approximately 20,000 people and taken another 10,000 captive.<sup>22</sup>

11th Division, which included a significant number of Kurdish soldiers, invaded the Pambak region. Following the self-defense of Mets Karakilisa (May 25–28) and the surrender of the Armenian forces, the massacres, killings, and acts of violence against Armenians in this settlement continued for three days under Javid Bey's command, acquiring an official character. The mixed crowd also participated in the massacres alongside the Turkish troops. Within a few days, the fertile district of Pambak was reduced to a pile of ruins.<sup>23</sup>

In Mets Karakilisa (currently the city of Vanadzor, the provincial center of Lori Province), over 3,500 people were massacred by Turkish troops; in Qshlagh (currently the Tavros district of Vanadzor city), 200 people were killed, including women and children; in Bzovdal (currently Bazum in Lori Province), over 300 people; in Hamamlu (currently Spitak in Lori Province), 350 people; and in Parni (currently Mets Parni in Lori Province), 150 people. Mass killings were also perpetrated in the villages of Darbaz (currently Darpas in Lori Province), Haji-Ghala (currently Lernapat in Lori Province), Avdibek (currently Tsaghkaber in Lori Province), Nalband (currently Shirakamut in Lori Province), Tapanlu (currently Geghasar in Lori Province), and Vardnav (currently Jrashan in Lori Province).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> A. Hayrapetyan, 'Zhoghovrdagrakan gortsënt'ats'nern Aleksandrapoli gavarrum 1918t. mayis-noyember amisnerin' (Demographic Processes in Alexandropol District in May-November 1918), "Scientific Works" of NAS RA Shirak Armenology Research Center, no. 21 (2018), 121.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>23</sup> V. Dallakyan and A. Marukyan, Gharak'ilisayi 1918 t'. herosamartë (p'astat'ght'eri yev nyut'eri zhoghovats'u)[The Heroic Battle of Gharakilisa in 1918 (Collection of Documents and Materials)] (Yerevan: YSU Press, 2008), 118–123, 271–272.

<sup>24</sup> National Archives of Armenia (NAA), F. 240, Inv. 1, C. 240, Sh. 36.

According to approximate estimates, between 5,000 and 7,000 people were killed during that period.<sup>25</sup> The massacres of the Armenian population were conducted in gullies, high mountains, gorges, and trenches, in an attempt to create the impression that the victims had perished during military operations.<sup>26</sup>

Just as in 1918, in 1920 the Pambak region witnessed the slaughter of thousands of Armenian refugees from the Alexandropol and Kars regions. Following the capture of Alexandropol in 1918, the inhabitants in many cases fled naked and barefoot, reaching as far as Mets Karakilisa. The Turks, blocking their lines of retreat, subjected them to bayoneting both in the valleys and in the forests.<sup>27</sup>

During the six months of military occupation, approximately 20,000 people were massacred in Alexandropol and the villages of Eastern Shirak and Pambak, while 6,000 perished due to starvation and epidemics. Under various pretexts, 15,000 people were taken captive and driven into the interior of the Ottoman Empire, of whom only approximately 300 to 400 returned. More than 5,000 women and girls were abducted and subjected to rape. Approximately 1,000 women were forcibly Islamized. Many, unable to reconcile with the dishonor, ended their lives by suicide.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, during the 1918 campaign, the Turkish army inflicted a severe blow upon the Kars province and the Alexandropol district. The Pambak region, in particular, suffered immense damage.

### **The Perpetration of Massacres Against the Armenian Population in the Kars and Shirak Provinces of the Republic of Armenia by the Kemalist Army**

The region had barely begun to recover following the proclamation of the First Republic of Armenia when a new Turkish military campaign commenced, which proved catastrophic for the provinces of Vanand and Shirak. In 1920, massacres were carried out in Kars with the participation of the armed forces led by Kâzım Karabekir. According to various sources, the Turkish massacres in the city lasted from three to five days, and after three days, the Pasha commanded that the city be cleared of corpses.<sup>29</sup>

All the warehouses, cellars, and hiding places were filled with the corpses of children, women, and youths. There were families from which not a single member had survived.<sup>30</sup>

Youths hidden in cellars, under beds, and in various other locations were dragged out, taken a few steps away, and either killed or taken captive and

<sup>25</sup> M. Nersisyan, *Hayots' ts'eghaspanut'yan anherk'eli p'astat'ght'er* [Irrefutable Documents on the Armenian Genocide] (Yerevan: Gitutyun, 2005), 128.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>27</sup> National Archives of Armenia (NAA), F. 240, Inv. 1, C. 240, Sh. 44.

<sup>28</sup> Hayrapetyan, 'Zhoghovrdagrakan gortsēnt'ats'nern Aleksandrapoli gavarrum 1918t. mayis-noyember amisnerin' (Demographic Processes in Alexandropol District in May-November 1918).

<sup>29</sup> National Archives of Armenia (NAA), F. 114, Inv. 2, C. 43, Sh. 32, A. Esayan, "Gharsi aryunot ōrerē" [The Bloody Days of Kars], *Komunist*, no. 47 (1921), 2.

<sup>30</sup> Esayan, "Gharsi aryunot ōrerē" [The Bloody Days of Kars], 2.



disappeared. The majority of those concealed in the outskirts of the city were massacred indiscriminately.<sup>31</sup>

The primary site for the massacres perpetrated by the Turkish army in Kars became the 'Kars Gorge' (Karsi dzor), where a significant portion of the peaceful Armenian population attempting to flee was slaughtered. Here, the machine-gun fire directed at the unarmed Armenian populace lasted for over an hour.<sup>32</sup>

The Turkish army showed no mercy even to women and children. During the days of the massacres and thereafter, women were subjected to violence by the soldiers (askars). Armed Turks entered the homes of Armenians, raped women and girls, and took many with them.<sup>33</sup>

Due to the scarcity of primary sources, it is difficult to determine the actual number of people massacred and taken captive in Kars. Some primary sources indicate that the number of the population massacred in Kars province (or *marz*) was 12,000 (predominantly men).<sup>34</sup>

We believe that this figure is severely underestimated and does not correspond to the reality. According to some sources, the majority of men between the ages of 15 and 60, approximately 30,000, were taken captive<sup>35</sup>. The majority of these captives were killed en route and in the place of exile. Approximate figures for the number of prisoners and the slain were presented by individual officials and private persons (Aram Lyulikyan, Aram Yesayan, Gevorg Gevorgyants, Vasile Ionescu, Father Khoren Stamboltsyan, and others). V. Ionescu, a Romanian citizen, reported in his letter dated January 27, 1921, addressed to the Plenipotentiary Representation of Soviet Armenia in Menshevik Georgia, that he was taken captive by the Turks on October 30, 1920, and was released a month later, subsequently arriving in Kars. He learned from a Turkish doctor, Nuri Bey, that 8,000 Armenians (women, children, and men) had been killed in the city, but based on his own observations, the number of the slain exceeded 10,000–12,000.<sup>36</sup>

Father Khoren Stamboltsyan obtained the victim data from Makar Harutyunyan, an employee of the Armenian Commissariat in Kars. Harutyunyan, a native of Nor Bayazet who had long resided in Tbilisi and spoke fluent Georgian, entered Turkish service as a Georgian, acting as 'supervisor of the work concerning the slain.' He acquired information about the massacred Armenians, which he subsequently relayed to Khoren Stamboltsyan. According to those data, the number of the slain was 6,270. Information regarding the slain was also relayed to Khoren

<sup>31</sup> National Archives of Armenia (NAA), F. 57, Inv. 3, C. 511, Sh. 6.

<sup>32</sup> Nersisyan, Hayots' ts'eghaspanut'yan anherk'eli p'astat'ght'er [Irrefutable Documents on the Armenian Genocide] 145.

<sup>33</sup> Karsum, Alēksandrapōlum' [In Kars, In Alexandropol], Harrach, no. 245 (1920), National Archives of Armenia (NAA), F. 114, Inv. 2, C. 43, Sh. 32.

<sup>34</sup> G. Yazchyan, Karsi ankman xorqayin patcharnere [The Deep Causes of the Fall of Kars] (Yerevan: Author's Edition, 2009), 9.

<sup>35</sup> National Archives of Armenia (NAA), F. 114, Inv. 2, C. 43, Sh. 35, 36.

<sup>36</sup> Archives of Armenia (NAA), F. 114, Inv. 2, C. 33, Sh. 71; C. 43, Sh. 34.

Stamboltsyan by Hakob Chaltikyan, who had been appointed as a corpse collector. Chaltikyan gathered 178 corpses over a period of 15 days.<sup>37</sup>

Vahe Artsruni, an eyewitness to the events who regularly received information regarding the massacres organized by the Turks in Kars, wrote that Karabekir had previously ordered the use of extreme measures against public mass killings. All fighting-age Armenian men were arrested, imprisoned, and, under the guise of transportation, removed from the city in groups, then massacred and disappeared. Artsruni wrote that the road extending from Kars to Karin had simply been transformed into a cemetery.<sup>38</sup>

Following the fall of Kars in 1920, the next painful event was the capture of Alexandropol on November 7, where the massacres perpetrated by the Turkish army continued with renewed intensity. Mariam Aslamazyan (born 1907 in Bash-Shoragyal, Kars District, Kars Province), a prominent Armenian painter who witnessed both Turkish campaigns against Alexandropol, wrote in her memoirs: 'Soon the main column of the Turkish army appeared. The Turkish cavalry rode past, and each of those beasts had a spear attached to their saddle, on which were impaled the heads of slain Armenians. Among them, the most horrific sight was the head of an old woman with long gray hair swaying in the wind. The soldiers (askars) were celebrating their victory. The doors and shutters of all the houses remained closed for a long time. The Turks continued to invade every house, breaking down or setting fire to the doors. They demanded girls and took everything they could find. They killed whomever they wanted, whenever they wanted.'<sup>39</sup>

The First District of Alexandropol province suffered the most, primarily the settlements located on the slopes of the Pambak mountain range. Massacres subsequently continued in the Karakilisa province (district). The population in the section from the Jajur Pass to the Nalband station was subjected to slaughter. While the primary blow during the 1918 Ottoman campaign fell upon the eastern part of Pambak, specifically Mets Karakilisa, the 1920 Kemalist campaign targeted the western part of Pambak. Refugees from Kars and Alexandropol found no safety even in the Karakilisa district, as the Turkish army reached there as well. The Turkish advance guard, moving along the Alexandropol–Karakilisa route, passed through the Pambak territory from Jajur, massacring the Armenian population and devastating and looting the settlements.<sup>40</sup>

On November 15, 1920, the Turkish army carried out a massacre in three Pambak villages: Ghaltakhchi (currently Hartagyugh in Lori Province), Aghbulagh

<sup>37</sup> Khoren K'ahana Stamboltsyan, 'Karsi ankumē' [The Fall of Kars], in *Hushagrakan zharangut'yun* (Memoir Heritage), Book 14 (Yerevan, 2011), 139.

<sup>38</sup> V. Artsruni, *Hay-Tachkakan paterazmē, Hay Spayut'yunē, Shat'akh* "The Armenian-Turkish War, The Armenian Officer Corps, Shatakh" (Yerevan: Mughni, 2002), 249.

<sup>39</sup> Mariam Aslamazyan, *Davtar zhizni. Avtobiograficheskie rasskazy* [Davtar of Life: Autobiographical Stories] (Gyumri: El'dorado, 2016), 17-18.

<sup>40</sup> 'Hayut'yan vitchakē Alēksandrapōli yev Karsi mēdj' [The Condition of the Armenians in Alexandropol and Kars], *Zhoghovrdi dzaynē*, no. 695 (1921), 3.

(currently Lusaghbyur in Lori Province), and Gharaboya (currently Khnkoyan in Lori Province). In these villages alone, 4,386 local inhabitants were massacred, along with 7,500 refugees from the Kars and Alexandropol regions who had sought shelter there hoping for safety.<sup>41</sup>

In 1918, the Turks carried out a similar massacre in the eastern part of Pambak. The majority of Armenians from the Kars and Kaghzvan districts of Kars province had managed to flee to Kars, and following the surrender of Kars, they panicked and reached Alexandropol, and subsequently, Mets Karakilisa. As a result of the Turkish military advance, the majority of these refugees were massacred en route and in the village of Mets Karakilisa.<sup>42</sup>

It is clearly evident from the accounts of the survivors that in 1920, criminals released from Turkish prisons also participated in the massacres of the Armenian population in the Karakilisa district, alongside the Turkish army.<sup>43</sup>

This was also the case in 1909 in Payas (a port city in Cilicia), where 500 prisoners released from local jails participated in the atrocities.<sup>44</sup>

These actions became more pronounced in 1914–1915, when, alongside arming the Turkish population, the Ittihadist clubs—which were more influential than high government officials in all the interior provinces—formed gangs composed partly of criminals released from prisons. The notorious Kurdish bandit groups were recruited into the Ottoman army, and they were granted the freedom to attack Armenian villages, loot, kill the men, and abduct the women and girls.<sup>45</sup>

In 1915, irregular Kurdish armed formations also participated in the massacre of Armenians alongside the retreating Turkish army. These formations were stationed in Bulanik, Datvan, and Chukhurkeduk, with 6,000–7,000 men in each location. Compelled to retreat, these groups subsequently organized the massacres in the surrounding villages of Bulanik, Akhlat, Artchesh, Aljavas, Datvan, Urdap, and Bitlis.<sup>46</sup>

Just as in the Ottoman Empire during the Armenian Genocide (*Hayots Mets Yeghern*), Kurds also participated in the massacres perpetrated by the Kemalist army on the territory of the Republic of Armenia in 1920, a fact documented by archival reports and survivor testimonies. Visible parallels exist between the massacres carried out by the Kemalist army in the Vanand (Kars) and Shirak

<sup>41</sup> National Archives of Armenia (NAA), F. 114, Inv. 1, C. 124, Sh. 6, 7; Inv. 1, C. 131, Sh. 12; Inv. 2, C. 27, Sh. 85.

<sup>42</sup> National Archives of Armenia (NAA), F. 114, Inv. 1, C. 134.

<sup>43</sup> V. Hakhoyan, 'K'emalakanneri irakanats'rats' zangvats'ayin kotorats'nerë P'ambaki tarats'kum (Širaki nahang) èst akanates-verap'rats'neri ènt'anek'an hišoghut'yunneri (1920–1921 t't'). [The Massacres Carried out by Kemalists in the Pambak Region (Shirak Province) according to the Family Memories of Eyewitness-Survivors (1920–1921)], *Journal of Genocide Studies*, 9, no. 1 (2021), 89.

<sup>44</sup> Nersisyan and Sahakyan, *Hayeri tseghaspanutyunë Osmanyany kaysrut'yunum* [The Genocide of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire], 231.

<sup>45</sup> Poghosyan, *Hayots' ts'eghaspanut'yan patmut'yun* [History of the Armenian Genocide], 545.

<sup>46</sup> Basentsyan, 'Hayeri k'otorač'nery Bit'lisi nahangum osmanyany banaki ev ayl zinvað kazmavorumneri koğmic' (1915 t'.) [The Massacres of Armenians in the Bitlis Province by the Ottoman Army and Other Armed Formations (1915)], 14.

provinces of the Republic of Armenia and the Armenian Genocide. Among the widespread methods of mass killing used by the Kemalist army in the Alexandropol and Karakilisa districts were burning alive, smoke suffocation, and drowning in wells.<sup>47</sup>

In the April 26, 1915, edition of *The New York Times* newspaper, we read: “A young man named Asatour recounts his escape from a well that was filled with corpses. He managed to climb up over the bodies and get out.”<sup>48</sup>

In November 1920, incidents of drowning peaceful inhabitants in wells were not uncommon in the villages of the Karakilisa district. In various settlements of the Shirak province, peaceful inhabitants were confined to pre-selected buildings and either suffocated with smoke or burned alive. This method was also employed in 1915 in the villages of Ali-Zurnan and Aghchan in Mush.<sup>49</sup>

The burning alive of Armenians was widely employed by the Turkish army during the Hamidian massacres as well as the genocidal operations perpetrated by the Young Turk and Kemalist regimes. Philip Currie, the British Vice-Consul in Van, reported on November 15, 1894, that Turkish troops had carried out brutal massacres in Sassoun. In Geliguzan, many young men were tied up – hands and feet – lined up side-by-side, covered with branches, and burned alive.<sup>50</sup>

In another village, approximately sixty young women and girls were confined to a church. Soldiers were then permitted to do with them as they wished, after which all were killed. Kerosene (oil) was used to burn houses with their inhabitants inside. In Bitlis, a soldier recounted seeing a Turkish soldier use a bayonet to thrust a small boy, who was attempting to flee the flames, back into the fire.<sup>51</sup>

Just as in Bitlis in 1915, in the villages of the Alexandropol and Karakilisa districts in 1920, inhabitants were confined to large barns filled with straw, the doors were covered with reeds/thatch, and then set on fire.<sup>52</sup>

Just as in Western Armenia during the *Mets Yeghern*, ritualistic killings and corpse mutilation were carried out in Shirak Province in 1920. Among the most widespread forms of ritual violence were the torture of victims' bodies, particularly the amputation of limbs: cutting off ears, gouging out eyes, mutilating sexual organs, and so forth, methods which were also widely prevalent during the Hamidian and Adana massacres.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Hakhoyan, ‘K’emalakanneri irakanats’rats’ zangvats’ayin kotorats’nerë P’ambaki tarats’kum (Širaki nahang) ěst akanates-verap’rats’neri ěnt’anek’an hišoghut’yunneri (1920–1921 t’t’.) [The Massacres Carried out by Kemalists in the Pambak Region (Shirak Province) according to the Family Memories of Eyewitness-Survivors (1920–1921)], 96-99.

<sup>48</sup> Pogossyan, *Karskaya oblast’ v sostave Rossii* [Kars Region as Part of Russia], 566.

<sup>49</sup> National Archives of Armenia (NAA), F. 240, Inv. 1, C. 326, Sh. 80.

<sup>50</sup> Nersisyan, Hayots’ ts’eghaspanut’yan anherk’eli p’astat’ghit’er [Irrefutable Documents on the Armenian Genocide], 65.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 72-73.

<sup>53</sup> H. Grigoryan, Zangvats’nerë yev zangvats’ayin brnut’yunnerë. Osmanyan kaysrut’yan musulman bnakch’ut’yan masnakts’ut’yunë Hayots’ ts’eghaspanut’yanë [The Masses and Mass Violence: The Participation of the Muslim Population of the Ottoman Empire in the Armenian Genocide](Yerevan: Haykarli, 2017), 126–132.

During the brief Turkish domination, the Alexandropol district was being depopulated of Armenians and laid waste. Already by January 14, 1921, Nahapet, a member of the Alexandropol Revolutionary Committee (*Revkom*), attested to those days, noting with astonishment that it could be said ‘we have no district,’ as scarcely 15,000 people remained out of a population of 75,000.<sup>54</sup>

According to the communication report dated May 13, 1921, sent by Communications employee Kostanoshvili to the People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs of Soviet Georgia, the goal of the operations planned and executed by the Turks was the annihilation of an entire people. Many corpses were only discovered after the departure of the Turks, found in wells, pits, gorges, ruined houses, rivers, and fields.<sup>55</sup>

According to the data compiled by the commission of local authorities, in the Alexandropol district, the Kemalists killed 30,000 men, wounded 20,000, took 18,000 captive, hanged 25, and caused 10,000 to die from starvation. The number of children killed reached 5,000, the wounded numbered 3,000, and those who died from starvation were 10,000. The acts of violence and criminal actions committed against girls were horrific. The Kemalists killed 10,000 girls, wounded 5,000, raped 10,000, took 3,000 captive, and caused 1,000 to die from starvation. Separately, the consequences of the violence committed against women are presented: 15,000 were killed, 10,000 were wounded, 25,000 were raped, 2,000 were abducted, and 5,000 died from starvation. Thus, the Turks were devastating and laying waste to the Alexandropol district of Shirak Province and a part of the Karakilisa district, which remained under their domination.<sup>56</sup>

## Conclusion

Thus, through his speeches and testimonies, Mustafa Kemal recognized and condemned the Armenian Genocide perpetrated by the Young Turks in the Ottoman Empire. However, one year after these statements, the Kemalists continued the same genocidal policy against Armenians and Greeks. The Kemalists carried out massacres in Eastern Armenia (1920-1921), Cilicia (1921), and Smyrna (1922). Their genocidal policy extended both within the territories of the Turkish state and beyond its borders.

Thus, successive Turkish regimes have hereditarily continued the genocidal policy of annihilating Armenians, actively involving the army – an institutional structure of the Turkish state – in this endeavor. This fact further demonstrates the responsibility of the Turkish state for this grave international crime perpetrated against the Armenian people. Regardless of the certain differences and specific characteristics between the Mets Yeghern and the massacres of Armenians in

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<sup>54</sup> National Archives of Armenia (NAA), F. 114, Inv. 2, C. 43, Sh. 7.

<sup>55</sup> National Archives of Armenia (NAA), F. 114, Inv. 2, C. 169, Sh. 13.

<sup>56</sup> National Archives of Armenia (NAA), F. 114, Inv. 2, C. 169, Sh. 13, 14.

1920–1921, it must be stated that they were linked in the criminal policy planned and consistently implemented by the Turkish authorities.

The massacres carried out by the Turkish army in the Kars and Shirak provinces in 1920–1921 should be viewed within the framework of the continuity of the Armenian Genocide, as successive phases. Thus, the involvement of the Turkish army in the massacres of Armenians not only attests to its direct military participation but also serves as evidence that the Armenian Genocide was a state-planned and systematically organized military operation aimed at the physical annihilation of the Armenian nation from its homeland.

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### **Conflict of Interests**

The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

### **Ethical Standards**

The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.

**The genocide of the indigenous Christians of the Ottoman Empire  
(Armenians, Greeks, Syro-Aramaicans/Assyrians/Chaldeans) A detailed  
documentation with three modules of nine teaching units each Verlag v.  
Hase & Koehler 2024**

Review from Jürgen Gispert\*  
*Leipzig June 2025*

**Foreword**

According to Max Weber, “power” represents the condition of being able to assert one's will (also) against the will of others. For its own permanence, power generates knowledge and education. Information always also means the path to information, which brings us to the political character of all education. If we want to exemplify this complex in the context of Armenian culture, the genocide of 1915 comes to mind historically, as well as the current expulsion of the Armenians in Karabakh by Azerbaijan, which is to be regarded as genocide. What does the path to information about the 1915 genocide and Karabakh look like and how is it organized afterwards? Are we in a mosque environment, at a German regulars' table or somewhere else where the topic might be discussed - it seems important to know this. But more important, because it is more comprehensive, is to know who or what paved the educational path and how. The conditions for the respective recipients of information, of education per se, are then derived from this.

The state-organized institution of the school is responsible for education, with decisions on the path to education being made on a case-by-case basis. The state character of education must be emphasized here, as can be seen in the example of Germany, where the historical connection to two genocides (namely 1915 and World War II) has had a significant impact and may lead to interference and confusion in its practical perception. If we introduce the issue of information about the Armenian genocide into the construction of a history textbook, we enter federal territory in Germany: In the so-called textbook affair in the state of Brandenburg in 2005, the then MP Platzeck, under pressure from Turkey, had the word “genocide” in connection with the Armenians removed from school textbooks, so that the issue could not be addressed and took a back seat to the Shoah. A second example: On April 24, 2024, the anniversary of the genocide, German President Steinmeyer visited Atatürk's mausoleum and grave in Turkey. Both actions reflect the Germans' relationship to their own history: Hierarchies that exist in principle

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but are not explained thematically in history books, instead receding behind them as part of them and unrecognized, narrow the view of one's own history as conveyed in this way to a mere representation of state ideology and its practice. This results in the need for a teaching and learning tool that provides guidance on understanding the information conveyed and the ways to access it. In relation to the topic of genocide, this means that the background factors that lead to genocide, but also to its informal processing, can be identified. This also means that genocides can be compared and differentiated in terms of their comparability.

### **The memorial at Luisenkirchhof Berlin – a “place of learning”**

Tessa Hofmann's book “The Genocide of the Indigenous Christians of the Ottoman Empire: Armenians, Greeks, Syro-Aramaicans/Assyrians/Chaldeans” addresses this need.

The book is one of a series of publications by the Slavicist, Armenianist, and sociologist, in which her focus is on Armenia, but which also covers the regional and supraregional relationships and interconnections between the peoples of the Middle East and the Caucasus in order to provide an overall picture. This approach allows the genocides of the Christian peoples discussed in the book to be integrated into the associated complex and discussed.

The didactic value inherent in the book is complemented and further expressed by the author's activities in the fields of memory and architectural policy. Hofmann initiated “a memorial for genocide victims in the Ottoman Empire at the Luisenkirchhof cemetery in Berlin, [the only] place in the world where Christians who died in the Ottoman Empire between 1912 and 1922 are commemorated together.”<sup>1</sup> Three times a year, on the respective days of remembrance, Arameans, Armenians, and Greeks meet to commemorate the victims together. Preparations for this memorial site began in 2012.

The choice of this particular memorial site is not without significance, as the memorial courtyard is located in the immediate vicinity of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Cemetery and is connected to it by two paths. The Luisenkirchhof itself is named after Queen Luise, who died in 1810 and found her final resting place here in a temple erected in her honor. Her lineage leads through Kaiser Wilhelm (KW) I and II, so that the local connection between Luisenkirchhof in its entirety and the KW Memorial Cemetery also conveys its inherent history of rule. This continuity of

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<sup>1</sup> Tigran Petrosyan: *Tag des offenen Denkmals: Ein Riss, noch nicht verheilt. In: Die Tageszeitung: taz.* 11. September 2020

Prussian and German history of rule is symbolically interrupted by the newer memorial, which draws attention to the violence emanating from this line of rule along the vertical axis and leads us, among other things, to World War I.

The fact that the memorial found its place in three open family graves may be due to chance in the search for suitable locations, but every location found for this purpose in such a milieu de mémoire leads to corresponding connotations.

The family burial sites are located on the west wall of the cemetery and have been renamed “altars of remembrance.” Luisenfriedhof III (first expanded in 1895) was originally known as the “cemetery of the New West and the new rich.”<sup>2</sup> Their family graves are grouped around the chapel and on the west side—as “monumental” and prestigious as possible.

The reference to the economic background of those buried here may raise questions about the origin of their wealth – what about German colonialism during World War II? Thus, the proverbial “incorporation” of memorial monuments into the otherwise surrounding cemetery architecture raises important questions about the underlying system. In addition to colonialism at the time, the aforementioned economic background also connotes the importance of the associated arms industry for World War I: Rheinmetall and the state credit system come to mind – both were already well connected at the time: On its website, the Rheinmetall Group appears almost euphoric when writing about its connections to the Ottoman Empire at the time. For example, it refers to an order hoped for by the German side in 1899 from the Ottoman Empire, which is referred to as “Turkey” on the Rheinmetall website.<sup>3</sup>

When Hofmann describes the now modified memorial in its entirety as a “place of learning,” we can also describe it as part of a visualization/objectification of what awaits us in the book. Hofmann calls this “Berlin ambivalence”: “On the one hand, we have a veneration of the perpetrators on extraterritorial grounds over which the Berlin Senate has no control. On the other hand, we have the memory of three million victims in the semi-public space in Charlottenburg.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Bezirksamt Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf Ev. Luisenfriedhof III (Luisenkirchhof). <https://www.berlin.de/ba-charlottenburg-wilmersdorf/ueber-den-bezirk/freiflaechen/friedhoeft/artikel.175689.php>

<sup>3</sup> 125 Jahre Rheinmetall – die Jahre 1889 bis 1918

<https://www.rheinmetall.com/de/unternehmen/historie/geschichten-rheinmetall/jahre-1889-1918>

<sup>4</sup> Tigran Petrosyan: Tag des offenen Denkmals. Ein Riss, noch nicht verheilt In Charlottenburg gibt es einen einzigartigen Gedenkort für die Opfer des Genozids in der Türkei. taz. 11.9.2020

Berlin's so-called ambivalence further expands the space of memory and remembrance, which has already been extended by the addition of the Luisenkirchhöfe and KW memorial cemeteries: If, thanks to the ambivalence indicated, Berlin is also referred to as the city of the perpetrators, we leave the cemetery boundaries and arrive in Charlottenburg, then also Neukölln, at places of execution by relatives of the victims of the Armenian genocide.

After 1915, several of those primarily responsible for the genocide lived in Berlin: Cemal Azmi, governor of the province of Trabzon (Trapesunta) on the Black Sea; behaddin Şakir, who was responsible for organizing and carrying out the massacres; and Talaat Pasha, a member of the triumvirate among the Young Turks. All three fled to Berlin, where they were shot by Armenians. All three were buried in the courtyard of the Şehitlik Mosque in Neukölln, which is located on extraterritorial land. Talaat's body was transferred to Istanbul in 1941 with a Nazi escort. The other two graves are located in the "Martyrs' Cemetery," as the Şehitlik Mosque is called. It is interesting to note in Petrosyan's article that the mosque belongs to the state-run Turkish-Islamic organization Ditib, and the land belongs to the Turkish state.<sup>5</sup>

Ditib, actually the "Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs," is subordinate to the Turkish religious authority Diyanet and is entirely dependent on it. This also had an impact on the selection of the memorial site: The political and cultural relations between Germany and Turkey in the present and in history led to problems in finding a location for the planned memorial. In the course of this, the original intention to select a potential location in public space was viewed critically by the city authorities and the project was moved to a semi-public sphere, namely the churchyard, which is owned by the Protestant Church. The reason for this was the possibility of vandalism and damage.

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<sup>5</sup> See 4 Petrosyan

[https://rheinmetallentwaffnen.noblogs.org/files/2019/07/1987\\_rheinmetall\\_vor\\_gericht\\_druck.pdf](https://rheinmetallentwaffnen.noblogs.org/files/2019/07/1987_rheinmetall_vor_gericht_druck.pdf); cf. also. Annette Hauschild - Helmut Lorscheid Annette Hauschild • Helmut Lorscheid. Kampagne »Produzieren für das Leben: Rüstungsexporte stoppen« (Hrsg.) Ermittlungen gegen Rheinmetall Forum Europa Verlag Barten & Co. Berliner Platz 2, 5300 Bonn 1 Bonn, Juli 1987. rheinmetall und der erste weltkrieg, in:

<https://www.bing.com/videos/riverview/relatedvideo?q=rheinmetall+und+der+erste+weltkrieg&mid=916079030A784C77B4BC916079030A784C77B4BC&FORM=VAMTRV>. Artillery ammunition: Rheinmetall receives largest order in its history. I found this information via Google: I typed in "rheinmetall and World War I" to get information about the war credits in 1914, as a test, so to speak. Result: Instead of providing information about this at the top of the list, the algorithm implicitly linked "Rheinmetall" to the current special funds of 500 billion from German Chancellor Merz's federal government rather than to 1914.

Now, in contrast, the two perpetrators, or rather their mortal remains, have not only found their final resting place in the Şehitlik Mosque, but are also politically protected in this resting place, as it is extraterritorial. Figuratively speaking, they stand out in their symbolism from the political space that protects them. Furthermore, they exert influence on the political space and the cultural sphere—also with interventionist intent—by pushing the planning of a memorial from the public to a semi-public sphere: the dead grab the living (Pierre Bourdieu).

The course and process of finding and erecting memorials provide insight into local memory politics and its practice. The political institutions and the (respective) milieu they create result in a constellation that gives the genocide of ethnic groups and minorities in the Ottoman Empire a position that could ultimately be described as the counterpart of memorial and counter-memorial. Reading the entire interior as counter-history begins as soon as one changes perspective, as described above. It is therefore a matter of the concepts used in the perspectives and expressed through them. The possibility of a change of perspective thus made visible is thanks to the initiative of Tessa Hofmann and her colleagues, which is continued verbally in the book.

### **The book**

The title of the book indicates the main structure of its content. It is divided into two main sections. The first section, entitled “Documentation” (15-229), is followed by the second section, “Learning and Teaching Modules” (233-381).

Since “genocide” is the umbrella term and the groups of Armenians, Greeks, Syro-Arameans/Assyrians/Chaldeans are the subject of investigation, the first chapter of Part I logically deals with the definition of what genocide means.

Hofmann presents the components of the definitions of genocide. In doing so, she emphasizes that it is important to consider the purely legal content of the definition. This means that it is “not up to the observer” to decide “whether genocide has been committed or not” (15). The wording of the 1948 Convention definition can be found in a subchapter of the second part of the book (2/I/Medium 2). This is where the advantage of the book's structure becomes apparent. The main text of the first part repeatedly refers to Part 2 with its learning and teaching modules, both as support and as a possibility for separate reading. The aforementioned Medium 2 is one of a group of 10 media distributed across 3 modules. The first six modules can

be found in 2/I, which deals with the genocide of the Armenians. In addition to the aforementioned passage from the Convention on International Law, interested readers are provided with reports from contemporary witnesses and survivors; Medium 3 deals with the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court on the crime of “crimes against humanity.” Furthermore, important information on recognizing genocide is provided, and thematic maps (in 2/III/Medium 9) are suggested as aids.

The fact that most of the media are in the chapter on the Armenian genocide is not intended to emphasize an Armenian aspect of the book. The contents of the media chapters in this part are also relevant for the study of the two other genocides in the following two chapters of the second part. At the same time, in addition to the eyewitness accounts and “thematic maps” mentioned above, all chapters describe the specific characteristics of the respective groups, so that they can also be read side by side for comparison.

The questions in the chapters on individual cases (Part 2, I-III) are structured in the same way. At the beginning, the learning and knowledge objectives are presented, followed by the course plan and information on the characteristics of the respective groups. Questions are asked about those responsible, the conviction of the perpetrators, how the extermination took place, the motives of the Young Turks for their actions, whether there was resistance, the fate of the survivors, and their situation today.

The questions about resistance and fate lead back to the introductory chapter of the first part, which deals with “from assassination to the Genocide Convention.” The murder of Talaat Pasha on March 15, 1922, by Soghomon Tehlirian in Berlin must be read in conjunction with the previous developments regarding retaliation/punishment of the Young Turks for what had happened. Internationally, “for the first time in legal history, a state crime was classified as a crime against humanity” – “crime against humanity.” The German translation “Menschheit” (18) used here is more accurate than the term “Menschlichkeit” (humanity), which is commonly used today and which, in this context, obscures the significance of the event and even euphemizes it. After the World War, however, those responsible were unable to translate this approach into a legal text and implement it. From a domestic Turkish perspective, there was also an attempt to draw conclusions in order to hold those primarily responsible to account. However, the aim was to exchange a conviction for the preservation of their own territory. The Allies, however, wanted the territory to be divided up. This was followed by an uprising on the Turkish side under the later Ata Türk. These developments are reflected in the two treaties of Sèvres (1920) and Lausanne (1923). The Treaty of Sèvres supported border demarcations

that would have given Armenia access to the Black Sea and provided for an autonomous Kurdistan, in which Assyrians, Syro-Aramaean, and Chaldeans would also have enjoyed autonomy. Sèvres was not implemented due to a lack of international interest and Turkish-Kemalist resistance, and culminated in Lausanne in 1923, which favored the newly emerging Turkey. Talaat was sentenced to death in absentia in Constantinople in 1919, but he was not there; he was in Berlin. This is where the story of the Wresch (Armenian for “revenge”) or Nemesis (Greek for the goddess of revenge) group, of which Tehlerian was a member, begins. Although they took it upon themselves to carry out the sentence previously handed down by a Turkish court, the nature of the act determines its assessment: as mentioned above, it was about the execution of a sentence and was therefore directed against specific individuals, not against the Turkish/Ottoman people as a whole. This is a significant difference from the Young Turks' desire for extermination, which was directed against an entire people.

Since “genocide” is a legal term, the second subchapter is devoted to Raphael Lemkin, the “initiator and principal author of the UN Convention” (pp. 20-23). Lemkin knew about the Berlin criminal trial against Tehlerian, in which the latter was famously acquitted. As a Polish Jew, Lemkin himself had been affected by persecution. The trial and its circumstances led Lemkin to question an existing legal loophole regarding the punishment of crimes committed by a state WITHIN its territory against ethnic groups and religious minorities living there: “If Tehlerian kills a person, it is a crime. But it is not a crime for his oppressor to kill over a million people? That is highly inconsistent.” (21)

In addition to the Berlin assassination, another assassination a few years later in Paris brought Lemkin to the aforementioned question. What both cases have in common is that the assassins were acquitted on the grounds of insanity. From the same conditions for acquittal—insanity—Lemkin concludes: “The perpetrator is insane and must therefore go free. [...] Gradually, I came to the conclusion that I had to act.” (p. 21) The quote is also interesting from a sociological perspective, because here the lawyer Lemkin senses behind the double insanity a malaise in the system, which judges people exclusively in psychological terms as not conforming to the norm. When psychological defects are found in assassins, the crime is individualized and immunized against the collective, which plays a part in such crimes. Incidentally, this can be seen particularly clearly in the case of recent attacks in this country, where the assassin always runs the risk of being declared insane.

Lemkin's research on the subject culminated in his groundbreaking work *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, published in 1944, in which he first introduced his neologism “genocide” (on p. 22). Here, the existing dissent between the original version and the final convention should be emphasized: Lemkin brought “his draft to the United Nations for adoption [...], but at the price of compromises. The Soviet Union would not have agreed to the convention if it had not been limited to religious, ethnic, and national victim groups. For there were millions of politically or socially defined victims under Stalin's tyranny.” (22)

The role of the state as the perpetrator of such acts was missing from the final version of the convention, as was any explicit reference to the genocide of the Armenians out of consideration for Turkish sensitivities. The shortcomings that were already present at the beginning of the term's career and described here led to genocide research, the findings of which are presented in chapters three and four.

When I think back to my own history lessons—significantly, the title of the textbook series was “Fundamentals of History”—what strikes me most is their didactic tone. The students had pages in front of them with black frames around the margins containing important dates (mostly battles and birth dates of rulers, dynasties, etc.) that had to be learned. The emperor, whose representative seemed to stand in front of the class, was in the foreground; less was learned about the positions of his subordinates. The actual hierarchy was reproduced by the students in their educational work, rather than being given instructions to critically reflect on what they were learning.

The arrangement of the points in the content of the book I have before me alone reveals the potential change in approach that must have passed former Prime Minister Platzeck (SPD) by (see above): In Chapter II, Hofmann introduces the Christian groups concerned, and only in Chapter III does he introduce the Ottoman Empire. This seems to be in line with the book's claim, as the groups described were already there before the Ottoman Empire came into being. This is a non-trivial aspect, which is why I prefaced my personal anecdote. The title of the subchapter, “Geography is destiny,” characterizes the circumstances and conditions of the conflicts with the Ottoman Empire. This places the original inhabitants of the areas in question on a chronological timeline, on which contact with Ottoman rule begins at a certain point in time.

If we translate the Armenian word for “fate” back into English, we get “forehead writing,” and we can also understand the title of this chapter as a prerequisite for appropriate channels of communication between the groups

concerned and their neighbors/invasers, which include the Ottoman Empire. In this way, readers learn about the history and culture of Armenia, Eastern Thrace, and Mesopotamia and their inhabitants as geopolitical prerequisites for the conflicts with the Ottoman Empire.

In the introduction to the book (10), reference is also made to the current demographic structure of Germany, which is home to a sizeable community of Turkish origin. It is precisely here that the author indirectly addresses a problem – are they Turks, Kurds, Armenians, Greeks...? The term “community of Turkish origin” can, under certain circumstances, be narrowed down to ethnic Turks and obscure the ethnic proportion of Armenians, Pontic Greeks, and Syro-Armenians. As a result, the relationship between ethnic Turks and the other ethnic groups mentioned remains underexposed. This would, for example, both romanticize and reproduce the political agenda of the neo-Ottoman Erdogan. This is an important aspect when it comes to historical representations.

The Balkan Wars, which were so costly for the Ottoman Empire, led to anti-Christian methods such as trade and economic boycotts, which amounted to a Turkification of the Ottoman economy. Entire professions, such as doctors, were excluded. (64) These methods were later repeated by the Nazis.

In the following chapter (IV), we learn a wealth of facts about the “course and components of the Ottoman genocide.” Thus, “the Greek Orthodox inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire [...] were the first and last victims of the Young Turk and Kemalist genocide policy. Political persecution of Greek Eastern Thracians began as early as 1911.” (65) Military historians and genocide researchers regard the two Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 as “the birth of a broad-based ethnic war with massive flight and expulsion processes unknown in Europe until the First World War (1914-1918).” (65) Between 1912 and 1913, 15,690 Greeks were massacred in Eastern Thrace. Protests against this were unsuccessful. (67)

These massacres were not haphazard, but were carried out at the instigation or with the acquiescence of the state. The interaction between a special organization (Teskilat-i Mahsusa) and the Central Committee of the Ittihat ve Terakki Party was decisive in this regard. In connection with the description of the special organizations, we also read the name of Dr. B. Sakir, whose remains lie in the above-mentioned “Martyrs' Cemetery.” The second “special organization” under his command recruited serious criminals into irregular units from August 1914 onwards, which indicates the genocidal intentions of the Central Committee of the Young Turks Party



even at that time. (72) Furthermore, the characteristics that characterize genocide, such as forced labor and the destruction of intellectual and spiritual leadership, are discussed, with reference to the individual groups, i.e., Armenians, Syro-Aramaean in Iran, and Greeks.

Of compositional interest is that this chapter on the course of the Ottoman genocide includes a subchapter that highlights the influence and impact of the French and British sides on the fate of the local population. The Sykes-Picot Agreement negotiated between France and Great Britain in 1916 can be considered a textbook example of the imperial division of territories over the heads of their inhabitants. Armenians who fled during the war and genocide were brought back to Cilicia and placed under French mandate, with English and Russian counterparts (the latter ceased to exist after the October Revolution). Humanitarian interests were put forward as a pretext, but France was primarily concerned with economic interests at the time: it had its eye on the seemingly profitable cotton industry and counted on the character traits of the Armenians, which seemed conducive to trade. However, by 1921, the pretext of helpfulness was over: Cilicia became a burden for the French, who now considered French-Turkish trade relations to be of higher priority, a view reinforced by Kemalist resistance to the mandate.(163)

Smyrna, today's Izmir, is an ancient city on the Aegean coast. At the beginning of the 20th century, it had a population of around 500,000, 150,000 of whom were Greek Orthodox. The inhabitants also included Armenians and Sephardic Jews, French and Americans. The Greek side intended to unite all Greek settlement areas. This was opposed by the Kemalist 'anti-imperialist' struggle. The Kemalist side won the decisive battle of Dumlupinar at the end of August 1922. During the 'disorganised retreat' of the survivors, villages were burned to the ground. (166) Smyrna had a multi-ethnic character, consisting of 'ethnic-religious islands' which, side by side but not together, formed the unity of Smyrna.

The tragedy occurred on 8 September. The Greek occupying troops disembarked after three years - along with the administration - and the next day Kemalist troops under Nureddin Pasha occupied the city, whose subsequent activities earned him the name 'Butcher of Smyrna'. The diary entries inserted here emphasise what happened. (167f). The similarity between Nureddin's methods and those of 1915 becomes clear here. (167ff)

As far as European responsibility for the catastrophe(s) is concerned, eyewitness accounts are given, whereby the quote from a French writer René Puaux stands out - the 'tragedy of Smyrna' was based on a 'double illusion': 'the confidence of the great powers in the European powers'.

Lemkin characterises the extermination of the Armenians as ‘religious genocide’, which in turn refers to the question of the conceptual comprehensibility of ‘genocide’. In the book, elements of the Geneva Convention constituting the concept of genocide are shown on the basis of the forced Islamisation that took place, gender-differentiating genocide and the removal of children. (179-193)

The total number of Christian victims between 1900 and 1923 is between 3.5 and 4.3 million, which is also Mustafa Kemal's estimate. (196) In addition to human losses, there were also losses of cultural assets: ‘[I]n the Ottoman-ruled part of the Armenian settlement area [there were] 2,200 monasteries and churches, of which at least 2,150 were looted and burnt down during the genocide.’ Early Christian architecture from the 7th century, 20,000 Armenian manuscripts etc. were destroyed. (197) We are currently experiencing a kind of *déjà vu*, especially in the case of Azerbaijan in connection with the expulsion of Armenians from Karabakh, which is accompanied by the destruction of Armenian cultural assets there.

The last, sixth chapter of the first large part is devoted to the relationship between Germany, Armenia and Turkey (198-229). It is important to note that those responsible in the German Reich left behind the necessary written evidence to come to the conclusion that they were aware of all phases of the extermination. The best-known example of this is the correspondence of Ambassador von Wangenheim, who testified to Berlin of the regime's will to annihilate. However, the regime's own system placed the military alliance with Constantinople above all ethical concerns. Heinrich Vierbücher, publicist and translator, worked in the latter capacity in 1915 as an interpreter for Arabic, Turkish, English and French for the Prussian Marshal Otto Liman von Sanders. He was thus able to observe the war and the expulsion and extermination of the Armenians for three years. His resulting journalistic work allows the conclusion that he took the potential of a translator to be able to translate from one culture to another through the translation process seriously: "What is certain is that the German government never even considered abandoning the alliance with the Stambul murderers, despite all the insolence of Talaat and Enver. They had put themselves in the company of criminals who held all the trump cards and succumbed to their stubborn will. Everything, including every moral consideration, was subordinated to the hunt for the phantom of victory." (205) This would support the Frenchman's illusion thesis above. However, if one does not want to treat all political action as illusory, which would then also explain the events in Smyrna and Cilicia, then ‘illusory’

becomes a rather superficial understatement of the events being described. Vierbücher, however, already describes a ‘victory of the emperor’ as a ‘phantom’. However, this would mean that the illusion lies in the political action as such. This leads us back to the beginning, to Weber's concept of power, which in this context provides the conditions for creating illusions or contributing to disillusionment. But then that would still be political action and not illusion.

An article by the director of the Lepsius House in Potsdam introduces the life and work of the theologian and activist Johannes Lepsius, to whom the world owes important information on the course of the extermination and the Armenian atrocities of 1894-96 and 1915, as he was at times on the scene of the events (209-217).

A work such as this is a valuable addition to the usual school products. A handout on the topic is only optionally available in two federal states, ‘but is either incomplete as far as the three victim groups mentioned are concerned or out of print’ (11). One of the book's basic concerns, the inclusion of all three victim groups, which is necessary for a thematic understanding, has been successful and helps to sensitise secondary school learners to the dangers of genocide.

Another advantage of the book is that the school lessons practised in this way introduce an interdisciplinary approach. Not only history, but also ethics and civics are taught, not forgetting the above-mentioned accounts of survivors and other fates. In addition to the extensive bibliography, there is also the option of accessing the web using the relevant URL sources and incorporating them fruitfully into educational work.

**Conflict of Interests**

The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

**Ethical Standards**

The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.

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