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## Geographies of Nationalism and Violence: Rethinking Young Turk 'Social Engineering'

Uğur Ümit Üngör

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## **Geographies of Nationalism and Violence: Rethinking Young Turk 'Social Engineering'**

Uğur Ümit Üngör

**Abstract.** This article addresses population politics in the broader Young Turk era (1913-1950), which included genocide, deportation, and forced assimilation of various minority populations. The article opens with an account of the genesis of the concept 'social engineering' and provides a synopsis of the literature in the field of Young Turk population politics. It then focuses on the implementation of these nationalist population politics in the eastern provinces to exemplify these policies in detail. The article aims to clarify that the Armenian genocide cannot be understood in isolation from broader Young Turk population politics and argues that a generation of traumatized Young Turk politicians launched and perpetuated this violent project of societal transformation in order to secure the existence of a Turkish nation-state.

## Introduction

This article explores the study of nationalist social engineering in the Young Turk era.<sup>1</sup> The leading question in this exercise is: how was Eastern Turkey molded by Young Turk social engineering? In other words, this article addresses population politics in the broader Young Turk era (1913-1950), which included techniques of social engineering against various minority populations. The focus will mostly be on an account of the implementation of these nationalist population politics in the eastern provinces to exemplify these policies in detail. The article argues that a generation of traumatized Young Turk politicians launched and perpetuated this violent project of societal transformation in order to secure the existence of a future Turkish nation-state. In this process, ethnically heterogeneous regions were subjected to more encompassing and more violent forms of social engineering than other regions. The eastern provinces were among these special regions.<sup>2</sup> It further advances the argument that a strong continuity of population politics can be observed between the CUP era (1913-1918) and the Kemalist era (1919-1950). Before turning to a synopsis of the literature in the field of Young Turk social engineering, a brief overview of the genesis of the concept 'social engineering' will be provided.

### I. The genesis of social engineering in the modern world

[2] The genesis of the concept of social engineering can be roughly traced to three traditions of scholarly literature: an early twentieth-century mode of thought involving the study of any form of behavior control, an interwar one focusing on progressivist state-sponsored policies of societal transformation, and a post-World War II tradition on violent, nationalist population politics. These traditions will be briefly outlined, using key thinkers of each tradition to highlight their main arguments.

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<sup>1</sup> A brief note about terminology is in order. In this article I will follow Zürcher's use of the term 'Young Turk era' to bundle together the Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti*) and its descendant the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*), which ruled the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic in the period 1913-1950. (Zürcher 1992).

<sup>2</sup> 'Eastern Turkey' will refer to the area east of the line Adana-Giresun, more or less bounded by the former Ottoman provinces of Sivas, Erzurum, Trabzon, Van, Bitlis, Mamuret-ul Aziz, Aleppo, and Diyarbakir – the latter being the main theater of exemplification in this article.

[3] The first references to the term social engineering originated in late-nineteenth century discussions by philanthropic industrialists on 'the social question' – the fate of blue-collar workers. In these debates, arguments were raised that surveillance and control of employees' behaviour on a group scale would prevent them from striking and would increase production.<sup>3</sup> The Dutch manufacturer Van Marken was one of these progressive employers, struggling for the rights of employees. In his vision of what he called 'the social task of employers', the latter were responsible for establishing social institutions for their staff. As such, he argued, powerful industrialists were 'social engineers' (van Marken 1894: 155-70). These ideas were further developed by the American historian William Tolman, who was initially interested in the improvement of social relations between employers and employees, and later in the application of sociological knowledge in labour markets. In a book he wrote in 1909 he defined it as the application of scientism (most notably social science) in human resource management such as employee registration, education, hygiene, and others (Tolman 1909). Though these conceptions of social engineering remained vague, in time, they gradually developed when their agency shifted from employers to politicians.

[4] The transition from the first to the second phase was heralded by scholars critical of the power relations between social science and social policy. This tradition is dominated by political and social scientists interested in exploring the function of science (Montagu 1946: 666-667). These scholars were especially questioning 'the role of applied social science in the formation of policy', (Hauser 1949: 209) and efforts of improving society as 'social doctors' (Davis 1937: 3; Case 1932: 331-346). This was the age of progressivism, during which social science was applied as a scientific and therefore sacred means to reshape society. Now, political elites saw the population over which they wielded power as raw material to shape and craft as they saw fit. At this point, political thinking became influenced by scientism, viewed as suitable for steering intrastate politics (Eidlin and Appelbaum 1983). In the early twentieth century, many countries ventured into experimenting with social engineering. In the China of the 1930s, social science was mobilized to rationally engineer a new society. This was 'a movement toward an empirical study of society in order to control the social, political, and economic forces at work' and reflected 'a belief in the technocratic potentials of the social sciences' (Chiang 2001: 1). But in the United States as well, expert bureaus and institutes for social and economic research (such as the Social Science Research Council) were

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<sup>3</sup> For a study of this see Östlund 2003.

established in a concerted effort to engineer a new society, governed through rational, objective, problem-solving, scientific method and by value-free social scientists. The means rather than the ends defined politics in this age. One author suggests that influential American elites were deeply affected by the scientism of that age and its overweening presumptions that most aspects of human life could best be apprehended by rational calculus and investigation. Social reform was a duty as society was discovered by social scientists, to whom 'the promise of applied science could be so awe-inspiring that reformers sought to apply the lessons and principles of engineering to the ruling of America itself' (Jordan 1994: 3; McClymer 1974). Another author argues that government officials, deeply committed to a vision of the engineered future, believed that World War I offered an unparalleled opportunity to instill a variety of 'progressive' values on untold numbers of men in an effort to build a national community that was 'morally healthy'. The American government thus attempted to create a homogeneous national culture through the use of education, recreation, and repression at the many military training camps that dotted the country during the war (Bristow 1996).

[5] The noted sociologist Karl Mannheim was one of the first to reinterpret the concept in his work as the relationship between social theory and political practice (Mannheim 1929: 67-77). He wrote: 'Planning is the reconstruction of an historically developed society into a unity which is regulated more and more perfectly by mankind from certain central positions' (Mannheim 1940: 193). His colleague, sociologist Karl Popper, studied social engineering by framing it in a two-volume criticism of ancient and modern enemies of democracy. Writing during an unimaginably destructive world war, he ascribed agency to the concept of social engineering, thereby giving it a face: 'The social engineer believes that man is the master of his own destiny, and that in accordance with our aims we can influence or change the history of man just as we changed the face of the earth' (Popper 1945: 17). Popper distinguished between 'piecemeal social engineering' and 'utopian social engineering', criticizing the latter for envisioning the total reorganization of societies based on intransigent ideological convictions (Popper 1945: Chap. 9). The research trend had now explicitly veered towards criticizing these type of exercises of power. It is important to note here that although sociology may have given birth to social engineering, it also provided the critique of it.

[6] One of the most eloquent texts on social engineering was formulated by James Scott in a cogent but in many ways unfinished argument. Adopting Popper's notion of 'utopian

social engineering,' Scott defined social engineering as borne out of 'high modernism', the aspiration to 'rationally engineer all aspects of social life in order to improve the human condition.' Social engineering entails legibility and calculability of both the physical and the human aspects of society, thereby disregarding and eradicating local knowledge, which he called *mētis*. He detected four key components of legibility: the administrative ordering of nature and society; a high-modernist ideology; an authoritarian, activist state; and a prostrate civil society, unable to resist these policies (Scott 1998: 4-5, 88). Scott provided examples of social engineering in Germany, Brazil, France, China, Tanzania, India, Ethiopia, and Mozambique, involving a range of policies, from urban architecture to forestry planning, and from agricultural collectivization to deportation and rural settlement. One of the countries he analyzed was the Soviet Union. Here, perhaps more than anywhere else, social engineering was as massive as it was violent. According to Amir Weiner, it involved a 'comprehensive plan for the transformation and management of society, one that would create a better, purer, and more beautiful community through the removal of unfit human weeds' (Weiner 1999; Hirsch 2005).

[7] When the study of social engineering entered its third phase, its scholars were influenced by the previous traditions. The focus of the research had shifted towards the more malign manifestations of population politics as scholars recognized that coercion, if not outright violence, was often at the heart of these policies. Psychologist Stephen Pinker defined social engineering as 'the desire to remake humanity by coercive means', informed and inspired by 'the belief that humanity advances through a struggle in which superior groups (race or classes) triumph over inferior ones.'<sup>4</sup> No discussion of this phase of social engineering can ignore the indispensable contribution made by Michel Foucault, who never used the term social engineering, rather coining the terms 'governmentality', 'biopolitics', and 'biopower'. He nevertheless defined biopower as 'numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations' (Foucault 1980: 140). For Foucault, social engineering consisted of technologies of population control.

[8] This was precisely what was at stake in the discussion on social engineering: the population. In a comparative study Quine argued that the discipline of demography rendered the population the focus of social engineering policies: 'society became a laboratory and the

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<sup>4</sup> Steve Sailer, 'Q&A: Steven Pinker of 'Blank Slate'', in: *UPI National Correspondent*, 30 October 2002.

body a battleground for would-be planners urging politicians to intervene directly in the evolutionary process.' These statesmen shared a belief 'that the state should intervene in the private sphere in order to promote desirable biological and social change', one of which was 'to murder en masse the racially unsound' (Quine 1996: 14-5, 132). Indeed, the zenith of social engineering in the twentieth century was reached in Nazi grand schemes to 'Germanize' Central and Eastern Europe. But the 'science' that was to inform the *Generalplan Ost* was Nazi science, an idiosyncratic amalgam of demography, anthropology, economics, biology, sociology, and geopolitics. Götz Aly and Susanne Heim studied this gigantic social engineering policy during World War II, focusing how the distinct ideological imprint in Nazi policies

[9] 'combined racial, population and structural policy in a comprehensive and unified concept for 'German reconstruction in the East'. The simplest and cheapest 'solution' was a population policy that was as deliberate as it was brutal. Founded on the racist norms of National Socialist society, it developed these into a practical instrument of social engineering. The resettlement of whole population groups created freedom of movement for the realization of vast projects, allowed the necessary funding to be 'released' and cleared the way for the attempted construction, by force and at the expense of other people, of a society that was to be a model of efficiency in its social and economic organization and infrastructure' (Aly and Heim 2003: 74).

[10] In other words, destruction and construction were intricate parts of Nazi social engineering. Although Aly and Heim may give disproportionate prominence to the role of economic factors, theirs is a valuable empirical study of one of the most violent episodes of social engineering in modern history. Zygmunt Bauman, in his thought-provoking *Modernity and the Holocaust*, provided more analysis to this thesis, advancing the bold argument that one can explain the Holocaust out of this modernist ethos. His definition of social engineering includes the clause of perfection and utopia and therefore approaches Popper's: 'policies meant to bring about a social order conforming to the design of the perfect society' (Bauman 1989: 91).

[11] Milica Zarkovic Bookman introduces a taxonomy of strategies of nationalist social engineering and connects social engineering to nationalist policies of augmenting one ethnic group's societal and political power vis-à-vis its rivals by engineering the demographic

increase of the in-group and demographic decrease of the out-group(s). According to her, six strategies of social engineering stand out for their prevalence and relevance. These include: 1) fiddling artificially with census numbers; 2) pro- and anti-natalist policies to raise the birth rate relative to that of perceived opponents; 3) assimilation of targeted groups into their cultural identity; 4) forced population movement to dilute the proportion of undesirable elements in particular areas; 5) boundary alterations to tilt certain subnational units' numerical balances in their own favor or plain irredentism; and 6) economic and political pressures and incentives to make certain group members feel inclined to leave the country (Bookman 1997).<sup>5</sup> Finally, one can suggest that deportation, ethnic cleansing, or in the extremest case genocidal destruction are the most violent (and least employed) of all the possible strategies of social engineering. Heather Rae provides a more detailed analysis for this catalogue of social engineering, locating these practices of nationalist homogenization in the modern system of sovereign, identity-based states. She argues that whereas processes of nation-state formation may have develop autonomously in Western Europe, in many other cases across the globe, political elites actively pursued policies of 'pathological homogenization' (Rae 2002). Although these studies exclusively describes nationalist social engineering, they manage to communicate convincing arguments about the nature of population politics.

[12] There is a caveat here, however. As a concept that has recently gained currency among scholars, the term 'social engineering' does not come without its pitfalls. It runs the risk of being complicit in that which it seeks to study: it should not serve to obfuscate the grim realities of mass killings and forced population transfers. After all, the Nazis deployed the notorious term 'ethnic housecleaning' (*völkische Flurbereinigung*) (Aly 1995: 434) and Slobodan Milošević used the term 'ethnic cleansing' (*etničko čišćenje*) (Kreso 1996: 11); Mulaj 2008), manifestly for this reason. In the Ottoman-Turkish case, both 'migration' (*tehcir*), 'settlement' (*iskân*), and recently 'relocation' (Halaçoğlu 2002), are three key concepts to legitimize, neutralize, and deny massively violent population politics. Therefore, when using the term, scholars need to consciously denounce malicious euphemisms coined by perpetrators and steer clear of vocabularies that include them. In this article, the working definition of the concept social engineering will include all violent population control by radical political elites in order to design a new society. Further unpacking of this concept would

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<sup>5</sup> For a study emphasizing deportation as the main form of demographic engineering see McGarry 1998: 613-38.



benefit its strength as an analytical category but is beyond the scope of this article.

## II. The current research: findings, challenges, directions

[13] The Ottoman Empire and its successors, including the Turkish Republic, have not remained immune to the era of social engineering. Especially after 1912, two consecutive regimes manned by a generation of Young Turks persisted in unleashing processes of social engineering on Turkish society, most specifically on particular ethnic groups and particular regions. Sociologically speaking, one could interpret these events as constituents of the 'dark side' of the Turkish process of nation-building, during which the moral and physical exclusion of minorities was a defining feature. Altogether, the violence and counterviolence cost millions of people from all walks of life their lives and livelihood. Listed and studied in isolated fashion, the various campaigns of violence may seem incidental and singular events, sudden explosions neatly encapsulated in time and space. But a closer look reveals clear ideological, motivational, and organic links and interdependencies between them. Given the status quo of isolated case studies, contextualization seems a challenge. It is an aim of this article to call this into question by pulling these scattered events together in order to problematize them and to consider what can be posited about any possible bigger picture.

[14] Turkish-nationalist social engineering consisted of a broad scope of policies ranging from marginalization, isolation, incarceration, border alteration, deportation, forced assimilation, population exchange, to outright indiscriminate massacre, and in the most extreme case: fully fledged genocidal destruction. The fate of the victims depended on their perceived ethnic and political distance to the newly proclaimed Turkish national identity, as well as on the contingency of war or international politics. The nationalist mindset of Young Turk social engineers allowed them to disregard feedback from the population so that ethnicity was equated with loyalty. Thus, for example, loyal Christian Armenian government employees were doomed to be excluded whereas tax-evading Muslim Turkish peasants were categorized into this new identity. Others, such as Muslim Kurds or Sephardic Jews were considered slightly more 'Turkifiable' than others, albeit ambiguously. Much of this was carried out with little regard for proclaimed and real loyalties. Once these processes of persecution escalated, points of no return were reached fast enough to erase millions from their ancestral lands in just years.

[15] What is the score so far of research on Young Turk social engineering? It is not widely contested that the establishment of nation-states in the post-Ottoman territories was a long and arduous process in modern history, marking the turn of a multi-ethnic empire into nation-states set upon homogenizing their populations. Students of Young Turk social engineering have established that in Turkey encompassing campaigns of homogenization were carried out by a generation of politicians, who managed to maintain power and persisted in implementing plans of demographic homogenization, carried out under the banner of nation-building. The following paragraphs will summarize the main debates on Young Turk social engineering, utilizing key studies and seeking to patch them together to contribute to an integrated perspective of this small but burgeoning field.

[16] On the historiographical level, Fatma Müge Göçek detects three discourses on Young Turk violence: an 'Ottoman Investigative Narrative' (being the accounts of Ottoman citizens before 1923), a 'Republican Defensive Narrative' (the nationalist master narrative denying all kinds of state-led violence), and a 'Postnationalist Critical Narrative' (comprised of critical intellectuals challenging the previous narrative and opening up new avenues of research) (Göçek 2006: 101-27). One could perhaps add to this portrait the 'Minority Memorial Narrative': the growing attempts (political and scholarly) of a plethora of community activists of various victimized peoples to document and vociferate the violence perpetrated against their groups and popularize accounts thereof, which were silenced and came to be relegated to oblivion by official Turkish historiography. Had they not drawn attention to these historical sufferings, fewer scholars would have picked up on these signals and problematized them in academia.

[17] In an early article Mark Levene argued that once the western ideology of nationalism percolated into Ottoman politics, it was only a matter of time before 'Eastern Anatolia' became a laboratory for nationalist visions of the future. When the Young Turks gained the upper hand in the region, the violent process of nation formation they launched came to engulf a mosaic of victims (Levene 1998). Hilmar Kaiser deepened this notion and demonstrated in pioneering research that the treatment of the Armenians and Syriacs, nothing short of genocidal destruction, and the deportation of Kurds and Greeks were integral parts of the CUP scheme of social engineering. Arguing that this scheme envisioned the cultural assimilation of Muslims and exclusion of non-Muslims, he drew a parallel with wartime Nazi policies in Eastern Europe by aptly titling the project as '*Generalplan Ost 1915*' (Adanır and

Kaiser 2000; Kaiser 2001). Further aspects of these deportation and settlement policies, albeit of Muslims only, were catalogued by Fuat Dündar in his work (Dündar 2001). Hans-Lukas Kieser's authoritative and definitive study *Der verpasste Friede* described many aspects and detailed histories of CUP social engineering. It rightly emphasizes that the homogenizing efforts between 1913 and 1938 could be seen as nation-state policies on an imperial scale (Kieser 2000). In a later article Kieser made the persuasive argument that in the Young Turk era the notion of 'modernity' became a discourse legitimizing the use of state violence (Kieser 2006). Beyond descriptive studies of the violence itself, Hamit Bozarslan's work minutely analyzed many aspects of Young Turk violence, periodizing broadly and cutting through the mystifying barrier of 1923. His studies catalogued how Young Turk elites, Unionist and Kemalist, apprehended the nature and meaning of their violent policies (Bozarslan 1999, 2005). These were the first instances in which the debate on Young Turk social engineering was taken seriously as an autonomous and legitimate field of study and expertise.

[18] Periodization remains far from a settled issue. In an account of the Turkish nation-building process, Taner Akçam traced its key aspects and linked it to the forced Turkification of Anatolia up to the establishment of the Republic. According to this interpretation, the Armenian Genocide was a constituent aspect, as well as the apex, of this long and at times very violent process (Akçam 2001: 49-147, 161-174). Others, on the other hand, have periodized social engineering from 1923 on. In a massive volume describing anti-Jewish measures and policies of the Kemalist regime, Rifat Bali has pointed out that although the Ottoman Jews may have never been targeted genocidally, neither were they ever to be included in the Turkish nation. His study described how during the Kemalist era the Turkish Jews were targeted for linguistic assimilation and economic and administrative exclusion (Bali 1999). An alternative interpretation was offered by Ayhan Aktar, a prolific writer on Kemalist social engineering, who argued that no Muslim ethnic group was considered to be a minority. According to Aktar, the Kemalists excluded Armenians, Greeks, and Jews from society through economic Turkification, isolation, and expulsion, due to the political essentialization of these groups by the Young Turk elite (Aktar 2000: 101-34). Finally, the expulsion and exodus of surviving and remaining Armenians from the eastern provinces have been thoroughly treated by Berna Pekesen and Vahé Tachjian (Pekesen 2006, Tachjian 2006). During the Young Turk era, for many of these 'non-Turkifiable' minority groups, ethnicity was often equated with loyalty.

[19] Some scholars have rightly pointed at the variegated nature of Young Turk social engineering, involving not only a human cost, but also the reorganization of space. For example, Erol Ülker wrote: 'Turkification was a project of nation-building, aiming to keep the unity of the empire under the domination of a Turkish national core'. Mildly glossing over the genocidal persecution of Ottoman Armenians and Ottoman Syrians,<sup>6</sup> as well as the formative influence of these events for the infrastructure of the envisioned Turkified state, Ülker maintained that the CUP had 'Anatolia' incorporate 'Kurdistan' as a form of nationalist geopolitics (Ülker 2005, 2007). A similar approach was adopted in a comprehensive analysis of Turkish-nationalist social engineering using the local example of Urfa by Kerem Öktem. He interpreted social engineering as a double-edged sword, involving the exclusion of non-Turkish people but the nationalist incorporation of their space, such as churches, schools, and other buildings (Öktem 2004). In his detailed study of the Armenian genocide, Donald Bloxham nuanced and complicated the image of clear-cut categories of perpetrators and victims in the post-genocidal period. He too, extended the chronological reach forwards, confronting a series of episodes of violent population politics in Eastern Turkey (Bloxham 2005: 97-111). Utilizing Republican archival material, Soner Çağaptay traced the roots of nation formation in the Turkish Republic to the *millet* system with its established categories of people. According to him, potential Turks could only become Turks after a process of filtration, involving a full identity change (Çağaptay 2006). Finally, in a recent article Nesim Şeker discussed the deportation of the Ottoman Armenians as a 'radical shift in the management of ethnic conflict from an imperial tradition to one peculiar to nation-state formation' and recognized that only proactive decisions by political elites could bring forth massive processes such as the Armenian genocide (Şeker 2007: 471).

[20] Were it not only for the fact that these works constitute a sophisticated and impressive corpus of research literature on the subject, they should not be easily dismissed as drops in the ocean. Considering the reluctance of scholars to work dedicatedly on these themes, these drops have managed to quench the thirst of students of Young Turk social engineering. One can synthesize from the previous that although research on this theme is developing rapidly, at present it still lacks many elements as well. Some of the research avenues open for exploration include themes such as the positioning of the Armenian Genocide within the larger framework of Young Turk social engineering. The treatment and

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<sup>6</sup> The latter is analyzed in great detail in Gaunt 2006.

experiences of less-well studied minorities such as Syriacs, Circassians, Pontian Greeks, Kizilbash, and Yezidis still await more investigation. Another issue is the problem of longitudinal perspectives of structural continuities in forms and appearances of violence (Üngör 2008). The field also suffers from a dire lack of purely descriptive studies of specific locations or regions. A final, pivotal aspect of the subject are the economic motives and consequences of the persecutions, largely ignored by scholars who studied this contentious issue.<sup>7</sup>

[21] Among the many challenges for the study of this subject is how scholars approach the Young Turks. When it comes to other violent dictatorships in the first half of the twentieth century, such as Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, the assessment of the Young Turk regime has been relatively mild. Once the Young Turk dictatorship had consolidated its position as a sovereign nation-state, in international politics it could count on positive appreciation by many European countries. This misconception that the Young Turk leadership was naïve, benevolent, and relatively powerless in the face of an overwhelming political crisis, a myth summarily dismissed by Kieser (Kieser 2007), is a lingering and ill-recognized legacy of the Young Turk era that haunts academia. In the face of the voluminous, sophisticated, and growing body of literature on (population politics during) other dictatorial regimes of the first half of the twentieth century,<sup>8</sup> research on Young Turk social engineering took off relatively late and is struggling with many challenges. The study of mass violence is one of these challenges. Unlike violence in modern German history, mass violence in the first half of the twentieth century remains remarkably under researched, both in Ottoman-Turkish studies and in genocide studies in general.<sup>9</sup> The reluctance to study violence stems partly from Turkey's 'special' place in world politics as a loyal ally of the West during and after the Cold War. The study of violence and various episodes of expulsions in the (post-)Ottoman era unfortunately has not yet reached the language of normality and precise formulations that it used to discuss mass violence under Nazism or Stalinism. Other important challenges, such as archival power and overcoming memory politics require a separate analysis and are beyond the scope of this

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<sup>7</sup> Zafer Toprak largely dodges the thorny question of the wartime confiscations of Armenians (Toprak 1982). Cf.: Kaiser 2006: 49-71; Der Matossian 2007: 22-3, 27.

<sup>8</sup> The literature is too vast to summarize here but one important contribution is Weiner 2003. Other comparative volumes are: Rousso 1999; Kershaw and Lewin 1999; and Baberowski and Doering-Manteuffel 2006.

<sup>9</sup> A notable exception is Zürcher 2005. For an overview of how mass violence is perceived in Turkey see Üngör, 2007: 11, 26.

### III. Population politics in the Young Turk era: the CUP period

[22] For a great part, Young Turk social engineering was rooted in the abovementioned beliefs that reshaping society was necessary and desirable. Throughout the Young Turk era, the modernist philosophy of scientism and social engineering informed and guided government policies. Although the history of forced relocation in the Ottoman Empire can be traced back centuries (Inalcık 1954: 103-29), the conduct of the CUP social engineering was nationalist and thus constituted a fundamental breach with conventional Ottoman imperial statecraft. The internal campaigns ran parallel to the external war effort with the Great Powers, especially on the eastern front against Russia. It was no coincidence that most of the direct killing of non-combatant Ottoman Christians occurred in the eastern provinces, where the threat of a Russian invasion backed by 'Armenian insiders' was most immediate in the paranoid minds of the CUP dictators. However, the deportations and persecutions were relatively autonomous processes and only partly linked to the ebb and flow of the war. The initiation and conduct of the persecutions and deportations were mostly in the hands of Interior Ministry radical technocrats, not military officers of the Ministry of War. In the following synopsis, an account of CUP social engineering will be provided, with examples drawn from Diyarbekir province.

[23] The outbreak of the First World War gave the CUP the opportunity to obtain dictatorial powers and carry through and expand their schemes of social engineering. When in the winter of 1914-1915 the war brutalized, population politics radicalized commensurately. Though still underresearched, the evolution of a general process of persecution of Ottoman Armenians is relatively well-known (Bloxham 2002, Üngör 2006). In April 1915, some Armenians had already sporadically been deported from their native regions, though this was not an empire-wide campaign. The deportation of practically the entire Armenian *millet* was officially organized from 23 May 1915 on, when Talât issued orders for the integral deportation

of all Armenians to Der ez-Zor in the Syrian desert, starting with the northeastern provinces.<sup>10</sup> That same day he urged the Fourth Army Command to court-martial any Muslim who collaborated with Christians.<sup>11</sup> The Third Army had been put under command of General Mahmud Kâmil Paşa,<sup>12</sup> who had issued a similar order. His orders instructed 'any Muslim who protected an Armenian hanged in front of his house, the burning of his house, his removal from office, and his appearance before a court-martial'.<sup>13</sup> These massive arrests and persecutions prompted the Entente Powers to announce a joint declaration on 24 May, denouncing CUP policies against the Armenians. The CUP leaders, especially Talât, panicked and attempted to disguise the deportations, requesting permission from the Grand Vizier on 26 May to issue a temporary deportation law. Although the deportations had already begun, the Grand Vizier endorsed Talât's law on the 29<sup>th</sup>, rushing the bill through parliament the next day. This legal cover was the official inception of the deportation of Armenians to the Syrian desert, authorizing the army to proceed with this *fait accompli* and delegating its daily implementation to the 'Directorate for the Settlement of Tribes and Immigrants' (*İskân-ı Aşâir ve Muhacirîn Müdüriyeti*, henceforth İAMM).<sup>14</sup> The Armenian genocide had officially begun.

[24] By the autumn of 1915, the Ottoman bureaucracy had depopulated most Armenian settlements, isolated or eliminated Armenian community leaders, and was already micromanaging the expropriation of Armenians and the allocation of their property to CUP loyalist Muslims. The destruction of the Ottoman Armenians denuded a vast economy of its owners: farms, businesses, factories, workplaces, ateliers, in some cities entire sections of bazaars were confiscated. Turkification of that economy was decreed with the enactment of several regulations of 1915, through which all remaining businesses were transferred to Muslim owners and the proceeds taken by the state. The practice of mass confiscation and plunder was in fact a shortcut to the notion of the aspired 'national economy'. On 6 January 1916 Talât ordered an empire-wide decree on the factories confiscated in the genocide. The order read:

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<sup>10</sup> *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi* (Ottoman Archives in Istanbul, henceforth *BOA*), DH.ŞFR 53/91, 53/92, and 53/93, Talât to provinces, 23 May 1915. This is the single instance in which the empire-wide nature of the deportations are reflected in one order at the most central level.

<sup>11</sup> *BOA*, DH.ŞFR 53/85, Talât to Cemal Paşa, 23 May 1915.

<sup>12</sup> On 12 February 1915 Mahmud Kâmil replaced General Hafız Hakkı, who had died in a spotted typhus epidemic. J. Erickson 2000: 104.

<sup>13</sup> *Takvim-i Vekâyi*, no.3540, p.7.

<sup>14</sup> *BOA*, MV 198/163, 30 May 1915.

[25] The movable property left by the Armenians should be conserved for long-term preservation, and for the sake of an increase of Muslim businesses in our country, companies strictly made up of Muslims need to be established. Movable property should be given to them under suitable conditions that will guarantee the business' steady consolidation. The founder, the management, and the representatives should be chosen from honourable leaders and the elite, and to allow tradesmen and agriculturists to participate in its dividends the vouchers need to be half a lira or one lira and registered to their names to preclude the capital falling into foreign hands. The growth of entrepreneurship in the minds of Muslim people needs to be monitored, and this endeavour and the results of its implementation need to be reported to the Ministry step by step.<sup>15</sup>

[26] The fate of one of the silk factories in Diyarbekir epitomizes this policy. The factory was owned by the Tirpandjian family and provided work for dozens of employees, mostly Armenians and Syrians. Silk was extracted, woven, dyed in various colours, and processed into regional textiles, characteristic for Diyarbekir and in great demand in the region. The Syriac weaver Lütfü Dokucu was the grandson of one of the employees. In June 1915, his grandfather was killed in the genocide when militiamen rounded up the employees, executed them outside the city walls, and threw the bodies in the Tigris. The factory and its assets, all the way up to the silkworms and mulberry leaves, were confiscated by the CUP government and allotted to local CUP member Müftüzâde Hüseyin (Uluğ), who exploited it in the decades after the war.<sup>16</sup>

[27] In April 1916, the CUP ordered the mass deportation of Kurds from the eastern provinces through a sweeping quadripartite decree. For the Kurds 'not to live their tribal lives and preserve their nationalities where they are sent', the CUP deemed it 'absolutely necessary to separate the tribal chieftains from their people' and to 'settle them separately in Turkish-populated areas in the province'. Those who were unable to travel were to be 'distributed individually in Turkish villages in the province'. In the minds of CUP social engineers all of these measures would prevent the Kurds from 'remaining a useless element by preserving their traditions and nationalities in regions populated by Arabs and Kurds'. Throughout the entire operation, officials were expected to report to the Ministry of Interior

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<sup>15</sup> BOA, DH.ŞFR 59/239, Talât to provinces, 6 January 1916.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Lütfü Dokucu (aged 81) from Diyarbekir, published as: 'Lütfü Dokucu' in *Diken* 2003: 49.



'how many deportees are sent where and when'.<sup>17</sup> In the following months, Kurds were taken at gunpoint from their villages and nomadic routes and deported to Central and Western Anatolia. During the deportations many Kurds died from frost or hunger (Kieser 1997: 113-50). Examples of the official correspondence are clear evidence on the nature of the deportations. The CUP aimed at forcibly assimilating the Ottoman Kurds into the envisaged Turkish nation. When initiating the deportations, Talât personally paid attention to the efficiency of the Turkification project. He requested specific information on the Kurds living in more than a dozen provinces and districts, inquiring: 'How many Kurdish villages are there, and where? What is their population? Are they preserving their mother tongue and original culture? How is their relationship with Turkish villagers and villages?'<sup>18</sup> At later times he checked again, this time asking how and where which convoys were being deported, and whether the Kurdish deportees had begun speaking Turkish.<sup>19</sup> Demographic dilution was another major aim: a general order prescribed that wherever sent, the population of Kurds was not to exceed the general population up to an upper limit of 5 %.<sup>20</sup> Again, the correspondence speaks for itself: the CUP orchestrated a large-scale attack on Kurdish culture, language, and demography, constituencies that could define the Kurds as a nation in the eastern provinces and therefore supposedly posed a threat.

[28] Along with deporting tens of thousands of Kurds *from* the eastern provinces, the CUP also ordered non-Kurdish Muslims sent *to* that region. This two-track policy was expected to expedite the demographic Turkification process. Most of these settlers were Muslims from Bosnia, Bulgaria, and Albania who had fled war and violence in the Balkans. Another group of settlers were refugees from Bitlis and Van, the Turkish ones being filtered out for immediate settlement in the vicinity. At first the settler-deportees were lodged in the seminaries and mosques, where other poor and miserable villagers were temporarily housed as well. These settlers were to be housed in the empty Syriac and Armenian villages. Some were moved to the Adana region, others were settled on the Mardin plain. Beginning in the summer of 1915, the settlement policy continued until the end of the war. The colonizers were

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<sup>17</sup> BOA, DH.ŞFR 63/189, Talât to Sivas, Mamuretülaziz, Erzurum, and Diyarbakir provinces, 4 May 1916.

<sup>18</sup> BOA, DH.ŞFR 60/140, Talât to the provinces of Konya, Kastamonu, Ankara, Sivas, Adana, Aydın, Trabzon, and districts of Kayseri, Canik, Eskişehir, Karahisar, Niğde, 26 January 1916.

<sup>19</sup> BOA, DH.ŞFR 62/187, Talât to Sivas, 16 April 1916; BOA, DH.ŞFR 62/278, Talât to Adana, 9 April 1916.

<sup>20</sup> BOA, DH.ŞFR 62/188, İAMM to provinces, 1 April 1916.

Muslim victims of ethnic cleansing in the Balkans who had sought asylum in the Ottoman Empire. Many of them had lived in Istanbul in shabby dwellings, impoverished, traumatized, and often vindictive. When the war broke out, the CUP accelerated its policies of social engineering and these refugees were incorporated in it. Albanians were but one group to be deported and settled. In June 1915 the İAMM ordered their 'scattered settlement in order for their mother tongue and national traditions to be extinguished quickly'.<sup>21</sup> Albanians were to be settled all over the eastern provinces, including Diyarbekir.<sup>22</sup> Bosnian refugees were to be settled in Diyarbekir as well. On 30 June 1915 the İAMM ordered 181 Bosnian families temporarily residing in Konya sent to Diyarbekir and settled in its 'empty villages'.<sup>23</sup> The next day, the movement and settlement of Muslims from Bulgaria and Greece was ordered from İAMM headquarters.<sup>24</sup>

[29] The information on the settlements of the Muslim settlers in the districts and towns of the eastern provinces is sparse. Little fieldwork has been conducted as to whether the settlers remained in the designated towns and villages, or if they migrated somewhere else. Armenian survivors recalled how in the late summer of 1915 Muslims were settled in villages formerly theirs. Local officials saw to it that the settlers were given the best houses of the deported Armenians (Kitabdjian 2002: 287). One example is the village of Tell Ermen in Diyarbekir province, the Christian population of which had been integrally massacred in July 1915. Tell Ermen was repopulated with Circassians and Chechens. Since the settlers already had ploughs and oxen, all they needed for subsistence farming was seed. The Ministry of War was ordered to provide the requisite seeds, distributing 1000 cups of barley and 300 cups of wheat from storage depots to the settlers.<sup>25</sup> When the Chechen population surpassed Tell Ermen's capacity, the construction of a new village for the Chechens was ordered in September 1918.<sup>26</sup> Later Tell Ermen ('Armenian hill' in Arabic), was renamed Kızıltepe ('red hill' in Turkish). All physical traces of its Armenian past had been effaced from the face of the earth.

[30] In the meantime, the genocide was raging in full force. While Armenians and

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<sup>21</sup> BOA, DH.ŞFR 54/216, İAMM to Konya, 28 June 1915.

<sup>22</sup> BOA, DH.ŞFR 54/246, İAMM to Diyarbekir, 6 June 1915.

<sup>23</sup> BOA, DH.ŞFR 54/246, İAMM to Konya, 30 June 1915.

<sup>24</sup> BOA, DH.ŞFR 54/246, İAMM to Diyarbekir, 1 July 1915.

<sup>25</sup> BOA, DH.İUM E-26/9, 27 December 1916.

<sup>26</sup> BOA, DH.ŞFR 91/197, AMMU to Diyarbekir, 22 September 1918.

Syriacs were being destroyed, the Muslim settlers were on their way. However, preparations were needed on arrival in order to lodge the settlers successfully. On 17 June 1915 the İAMM headquarters reiterated its request for economic and geographic data on the emptied Armenian villages of Diyarbakir. In order to send settlers to the province, the local capacity to absorb immigrants had to be determined.<sup>27</sup> A week later it ordered educational commodities to be provided for the settlers:

[31] It is necessary to appropriate the schools of the towns and villages that have been emptied of Armenians to Muslim immigrants to be settled there. However, the present value of the buildings, the amount and value of its educational materials needs to be registered and sent to the department of general recordkeeping.<sup>28</sup>

[32] This national order was a warrant for the seizure of all Ottoman Armenian schools and their conversion into Ottoman Turkish schools. School benches, blackboards, book cabinets, and even paper and pens were allocated to the yet-to-arrive settlers. Local branches of the Commission for Abandoned Properties were assigned to carry out this operation.<sup>29</sup> In Diyarbakir, the large Armenian village of Qarabash was affected by this order. After the autochthonous inhabitants had been destroyed in May 1915, Balkan Muslims were settled in the village in the summer of 1915 and their children were sent to the school previously run by Armenians. According to elderly villagers, when they arrived in Qarabash they scrubbed the blood stains off the school walls first before they brought it into use.<sup>30</sup>

[33] CUP social engineering came to a halt only with the end of the war. In October 1918 the Ottoman Empire suffered a catastrophic defeat when all of its frontlines disintegrated, triggering a sudden implosion of the army. On 30 October 1918 the parties signed a truce that sanctioned unconditional surrender (Keegan 1998: 415; Zürcher 1998: 266-75). Paralyzed by panic and defeatism, that next night the inner circle of the CUP burnt suitcases full of documents, disbanded the CUP as a political party, and fled on a German submarine to Odessa. The seven escapees were the triumvirate (Enver, Talât, Cemal), the doctors Bahaeddin Şakir and Nâzım, and two others (Aydemir 1972: 497). The power vacuum was filled by a new cabinet led by the Freedom and Coalition Party (a.k.a. Liberal Entente),

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<sup>27</sup> BOA, DH.ŞFR 54/39, İAMM to Diyarbakir, 17 June 1915.

<sup>28</sup> BOA, DH.ŞFR 54/101, İAMM to provinces, 22 June 1915.

<sup>29</sup> BOA, DH.ŞFR 54/331, İAMM to Diyarbakir, 7 July 1915.

<sup>30</sup> Notes from fieldwork in Qarabash and interview conducted with inhabitant of Qarabash M.M., 14 August 2007.

the CUP's sworn enemy. They ruled the Ottoman Empire throughout most of the interregnum (1918-1923) as long as the Istanbul government wielded sufficient actual power in Anatolia (Tunaya 1997: 29-61). The very day after their rise to power, they immediately began reversing CUP policies: Armenians and Kurds were encouraged to return, orphans were allowed to go back to their families, and most importantly, the Ottoman press broadly exposed and discussed CUP war crimes. But with the resurrection of the CUP in Anatolia this process of reckoning would soon come to an end.

[34] The relevance of studying CUP social engineering in its mutual interdependence lies in the notion that the deportations can function as control groups for each other. Ultimately, the separate policies were too interconnected to be understood in total isolation. Understanding the treatment of Armenians during the forced relocations requires contrasting it with the treatment of Kurds and Balkan Muslims during similar experiences. It then clearly appears that whereas Armenians were not given proper nutrition and rest during the endless marches, the Muslims were. Mass death was nothing to be fatalistic about, it was a consequence of deliberate choices and orders for rationing issued from Istanbul, and popular conduct only exacerbated the suffering. For a large part this can explain why hundreds of thousands of Armenians died of exhaustion and starvation in 1915, but hundreds of thousands of Muslims survived the same distances and heat in the same year, or later years, when, *nota bene*, the Empire had even less resources at its disposal. Also, colligating the Armenian genocide with the deportation of the Kurds and settlement of Turks strongly suggests that without the former, the latter could not have been financed and carried out to the extent it was.

#### **IV. Population politics in the Young Turk era: the RPP period**

[35] When the CUP dissolved itself in 1918, it continued functioning under other names and succeeded in launching Mustafa Kemal to organize the Anatolian resistance it had planned since 1914. After a transition process many of the CUP's diligent social engineers ended up working for Mustafa Kemal's Republican People's Party (RPP). The resurrection of Young Turk elites gave rise to the establishment of a modern dictatorship of repressive rule, driven by zealous devotion to the tenets of a Gökalpian ideology, a set of ideas and goals that

assumed the mystical character of religious doctrine. The ultimate totalitarian aim of this cohort of men was to continue recreating the population in their own image and to extinguish the plurality and differentiation of it (Zürcher 1984; Akural 1979; Hanioglu 1997). As such, the Greco-Turkish and Armeno-Turkish wars (1919-1923) were in essence processes of state formation that represented a continuation of ethnic unmixing and exclusion of Ottoman Christians from Anatolia. The Kemalists assumed control of local elites who had collaborated in CUP crimes, and Armenian villagers who returned to their farms and fields were chased out, terrorized, and bullied away (Marashlian 1998). The subsequent proclamation of a Turkish nation-state on 29 October 1923 was more of an intermezzo than a starting point or an end. Its analytical use for the historiography of the Young Turk era has been convincingly proven shaky, due to compelling continuities in power structure, ideology, cadre, and last but not least: population policy (Zürcher 1995: 7-8, 271). No matter how thorough the Young Turk campaigns of social engineering were between 1913 and 1923, they were not the end to nationalist homogenization. Untroubled by restraints of any kind, Turkification now continued behind the tightly knit curtains of national sovereignty and widespread international support for the Young Turks' policies of 'modernization' (Bloxham 2007: 223-234).

[36] Most Young Turk nationalists treated Turkey's Muslim minorities as assimilable raw ethnic material. They adhered to the epistemological thesis that individual human beings are born with no innate or built-in mental content, in a word, 'blank': not only was their entire resource of knowledge built up gradually from their socialization by the outside world, this socialization could be engineered from above. In other words, their ideologues considered the population fully malleable. In interwar Turkey, integral nationalism triumphed in social and political discourse, and was shared by the collective dictatorship of the party-state. But the regime abandoned its belief in sociological categories above biological ones when it came to the non-Muslims, such as Jews, Greeks, Armenians, and perhaps also Syrians. Although there were attempts to 'Turkify' these groups, they were generally essentialized in their identifications and considered largely 'unturkifiable'. Moreover, as they were privileged to maintain their own educational infrastructure (with the exception of Syrians), the regime had limited means to extend its reach into their schools and spread Turkish nationalism. The rest of the population, consisting of the former Muslim millet, became the object of large-scale educational and cultural policies aimed at 'Turkification' – especially in the culturally diverse and historically multi-ethnic eastern provinces.

[37] Decades of Young Turk social engineering triggered many different responses throughout Turkey (Brockett 1999: 44-66). One of these involving heavy resistance was the Kurdish uprising of Shaikh Said, erupting in mid-February 1925. An alliance of Kurdish intellectuals, officers, civil servants, and clergy assumed control of a part of the eastern provinces and marched on Diyarbakir city without success (Bozarslan 2003, 1988). The uprising was poorly understood by the Young Turk political elite, which, instead of listening to the Kurds' claims and requests and negotiating a way out of the conflict, silenced moderate oppositionists and resorted immediately to mass violence. Built into the government's system of domination was the tendency to proclaim its own normalcy, so to acknowledge the Kurds' mass resistance was to acknowledge the possibility that something might have been wrong with the system. Thus, the government quelled the insurrection with huge levels of violence, destroying villages and summarily executing thousands of combatants and non-combatants. The official correspondence euphemistically referred to 'severe precautionary measures' against 'brigands' to describe what eyewitnesses point-blank related as "cramming villagers into haylofts and burning them alive."<sup>31</sup> In the northern region of Lice, some formerly Armenian villages with Kurdish inhabitants were burnt the second time in a decade. After a scorched earth policy in which the government employed aerial bombing, Shaikh Said was arrested and hanged on 29 June 1925 with 46 of his supporters and relatives, including his son (Olson 1989).

[38] The uprising only served to confirm established Young Turk prejudices and fears that Kurdish society was a centrifugal, tribalist, reactionary, and potentially separatist threat that needed to be dealt with urgently. On 8 September 1925 Mustafa Kemal personally authorized a special council to devise a report that would serve as a blueprint for a pursuance of Young Turk social engineering in Eastern Turkey. Although his exhortations for 'comprehensive reforms' in the East made clear a general direction Kemalist policy was to follow, they were barren of specifics. On the one hand, these exhortations constituted a *carte blanche* to the various Young Turks descending on the East that the restraints under which they had operated thus far, if any, were now lifted. No one was going to be called to account for being too energetic or ruthless. On the contrary, ambitious Young Turks now had to prove themselves capable of living up to their rhetoric. On the other hand, Mustafa Kemal's

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<sup>31</sup> Kahraman 2003: 168-9, quoting both military correspondence and eyewitness testimony. For an oral history of the 1938 Dersim massacre see Çağlayan 2003.

communications were an incitement to Young Turk social engineers to produce proposals for policies that would turn his vague nationalist pronouncements into specific programs with well-defined goals. Those who authored proposals most attuned to Mustafa Kemal's wishes were awarded with enhanced powers to carry them out. Those who not only proved themselves capable of carrying out the drastic measures of 'reform' but also displayed an organizational and creative finesse for 'solutions to the eastern question' became the instruments of these more articulated policies.<sup>32</sup>

[39] The council, formally named 'Reform Council for the East' (*Şark Islahat Encümeni*), was chaired by İsmet İnönü and its positions were held by politicians and officers such as parliamentarian Mustafa Abdülhalik Renda, Interior Minister Cemil Uybado, Minister of Economy Ali Cenani, Minister of Justice Mahmut Esat Bozkurt, Lieutenant-General Kâzım Özalp, and Chief of Staff Fevzi Çakmak (Bayrak 1993: 481). All of these were former CUP members or sympathizers. Among these officials were those who had experience in this field: Şükrü Kaya, Celal Bayar, and Mustafa Abdülhalik Renda. Within two weeks they completed the report and presented it to parliament for evaluation. The final report these men signed on 24 September 1925 was nothing short of a radical expansion of existing Young Turk fantasies and methods of social engineering. It reflected a staunch belief in the feasibility of crafting a society through large-scale, top-down authoritarian politics, coupled with an ethno-nationalist vision of 'landscaping the human garden' at distance. In previous explorations this approach had been characterized by Cemil Uybado as a 'colonial administrative method', thus explicating the plan as a form of internal colonization (Bayrak 1993: 467-480).

[40] In the report they sketched the East's future, recommending patching together the eastern provinces and rejoining them into 'Inspectorates-General' (Koçak 2003) that would exercise authority over an expanded military administration, hereby ruling all of the eastern provinces by martial law for indeterminate time. A total of seven million Turkish lira would be allocated to supervise a comprehensive set of measures. The Kurdish intelligentsia and chieftain class was to be prevented from reviving as a ruling class once and for all, so that the East would never again become a battlefield. The territory would be cleared of 'persons, families, and their relatives whose residence in the east the government considers inappropriate' through resettlement in Western Turkey. East of the Euphrates a policy

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<sup>32</sup> For similar mechanisms of dictatorial power see Kershaw 2004: 164-82.

categorically prohibiting 'the use of all non-Turkish languages' and 'the employment of Kurds in even secondary offices' would be put into vigorous practice. Kurds who had taken up residence in Armenian villages were to be immediately evicted, deported to the western provinces, and Turks were to be settled in those villages (Bayrak 1993: 481-9). The fate of the deportees was outlined in a top secret order issued by the Interior Ministry in January 1930. The Kurds who were sent west were never to exceed the local population in order to be 'made Turkish in language, tradition, and desire' (Bayrak 1993: 509).

[41] Prior to implementation, the government had a detailed, top-secret inventory of Kurdish tribes prepared and published for internal circulation. This booklet identified per province dozens of Kurdish tribes and included details on their perceived loyalty to the state. Tribes were classified into 'loyal' or 'disloyal' ones and details were provided on their mutual relationships.<sup>33</sup> The plan conceived of deportation as a powerful and legitimate tool to subdue and assimilate Kurds as a 'solution' of a 'problem', or an 'answer' to a 'question'. On 17 July 1927 the government passed a law that empowered the Ministries of Justice, Interior, and Economy to co-organize the deportation of 1 400 people and 80 families to various western provinces.<sup>34</sup> Very soon after, those Kurds who were earmarked for deportation were taken from their homes and carried off to an isolated and hostile environment in various western provinces. Shaikh Said's daughter had been living in an empty house with her children when gendarmes arrived to gather surviving family members, picking up her son out his crib, and deporting them all to Thrace (Kaya 2004: 33-34). At the same time, the government summoned Armenian and Syriac survivors and returnees who were living in various cities and towns in the Southeast to leave. More than ten thousand people were expelled to Syria, where they settled in refugee camps near Aleppo and in Qamishli (Tachjian 2006).

[42] The Turkification campaign achieved some degree of success in certain areas, particularly in easily controllable plateaus and valleys. Overall, though, the regime's ham-fisted methods only alienated non-Turkish ethnic groups and stimulated the inception of nationalist movements by their elites. Hence it was no surprise that resistance to the Kemalists continued, simmering in the Sason region and erupting around Mount Ararat in 1930. When the existing policies did not reach the imagined result, the government's

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<sup>33</sup> *Aşiretler Raporu* (Istanbul: Kaynak, 2000).

<sup>34</sup> The text of this law, numbered 1097, is published in Kökdemir 1952: 28-30.



frustration turned into radicalization. The existing plans, ambitious as they were, did not match the major acceleration in Kemalist social engineering after the consolidation of the Kemalist one-party dictatorship in 1931.<sup>35</sup> From then on, social engineering intensified markedly, particularly towards the eastern provinces. On 14 June 1934, the government ratified the 'Settlement Law', a very elaborate legal text sanctioning the mass deportation of entire categories of peoples, everything from 'itinerant Gypsies' to 'anarchists' and 'those who are not devoted to Turkish culture', sweeping notions that would most of all target and strike Kurds. Again, the eastern provinces were the object of large-scale, broad-brush social engineering.<sup>36</sup>

[43] These policies, formulated at a national level, produced local implementations that have been left virtually unexplored. On 1 January 1928, the government established the First Inspectorate-General, centered in Diyarbakir, and appointed İbrahim Tali Öngören (1875-1952) its first Inspector-General. The Inspector's tasks were to implement the general policies laid out in the Reform Plan in the huge area under his jurisdiction. The many reports these men sent to Ankara offer a unique insight into the local dynamics of social engineering in the eastern provinces. All of the themes mentioned in the Reform Plan return in daily practices such as militarization, disarmament, assimilation, infrastructure, and most interestingly: deportation (Koçak 2003: 81-82, 100-101). The aforementioned booklet on Kurdish tribes included ten pages on Diyarbakir province. One of these was the influential Azizoğlu dynasty, a branch of the Narek tribe residing in and around Silvan, a town east of Diyarbakir.<sup>37</sup> Although the report identified the Azizoğlu as a loyal and obedient family that had not participated in any rebellion, in 1925 dozens of Azizoğlus were rounded up and deported to Thrace. A second wave of deportations in 1935 sent hundreds more to Western Turkey.<sup>38</sup> The Cemilpaşazâde were another wealthy and influential family who were deported in two phases. They were expropriated according to the Reform Plan and while many were deported to the Aegean region many others were expelled to Syria and denaturalized.<sup>39</sup> Their businesses and property, including a huge mansion in Diyarbakir city, were transferred to the state and to

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<sup>35</sup> Discussed in Tunçay 1981.

<sup>36</sup> The law was published in *Resmi Gazete*, no.2733, 21 June 1934.

<sup>37</sup> *Aşiretler Raporu*, pp.92-102.

<sup>38</sup> Interview conducted with Azizoğlu family, Stockholm, 11 June 2005.

<sup>39</sup> *Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi* (Republican Archives in Ankara, henceforth *BCA*), 030.18.01.02/40.80.15, Governmental decree number 15277, signed by the Council of Ministers and President Mustafa Kemal, 12 November 1933. See also Malmîsanij 2005.

Turkish owners.<sup>40</sup> The campaigns were accompanied by a thorough erasure of the memory of the events. Official historians wrote volume after volume, silencing the voices of the erased and persecuted and recasting all ethnic minorities as Turks, trivializing their historical and contemporary existence.<sup>41</sup>

[44] The key discursive devices which the Kemalist center employed to represent their relationship with the Kurdish periphery was 'civilization' (*medeniyet*). The non-Turkish population of the eastern provinces was looked down upon as primitive and inferior, fit for colonial rule by a Turkish master nation which operated in the name of progress and rationality (Zeydanlıoğlu 2007). They were viewed, moreover, as inherently treacherous and anti-Turkish and hence threats to security against which Turkish state and army personnel had to be permanently on guard. Such an attitudinal climate would prove to be highly conducive to the harsh treatment of the civilian population of the East and the committing of mass violence. In the period after 1931 official discourse acquired a particularly denigrating and racist undertone towards Kurds, among others. *Cumhuriyet*, the mouthpiece of the Kemalist party-state, wrote about Kurds, that "they allow their emotions and brains to be lead by simple instincts like ordinary animals and therefore can only think crudely and foolishly... there is absolutely no difference between African barbarians and cannibals and these creatures who mix raw meat with cracked wheat and eat it just like that."<sup>42</sup> In a series of articles, the nationalist journalist Yusuf Mazhar wrote about Kurds:

[45] Even though they may be more capable than the redskins in the United States, they are – history is my witness – endlessly bloodthirsty and cruel... They are completely bereft of positive feelings and civilized manners. For centuries, they have been a plague for our race... Under Russian rule they were prohibited to descend from the mountains, where they did not lead humane and civilized lives, therefore these creatures are really not inclined to profit from civilization... In my opinion, the dark spirit, crude mental state, and ruthless manners of this Kurdish rabble is impossible to break.<sup>43</sup>

[46] These Young Turk ideas have been portrayed in a different form by Ussama Makdisi as 'Ottoman orientalism', which, in the case of the Young Turks, featured a complex

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<sup>40</sup> Research notes from fieldwork in Diyarbakir city, 14 August 2007.

<sup>41</sup> For the Diyarbakir region see e.g. Günkut 1937; Konyar, 1936.

<sup>42</sup> *Cumhuriyet*, 13 July 1930, p.4.

<sup>43</sup> *Cumhuriyet*, 18, 19, and 20 August 1930, p.3.

of attitudes produced by exposure to an amalgam of modern European ideas 'that implicitly and explicitly acknowledged "the West" to be the home of progress and "the East", writ large, to be a present theater of backwardness' (Makdissi 2002). Interwoven throughout much of the Young Turks' writings was the belief that Turkish is the language of civilization, administrative rationalism, and cultural enlightenment – and that the non-Turkish peoples operated at a lower cultural plane. Social engineering during the Young Turk era was therefore also a civilizing mission, comparable in discourse and practice to the European colonial ones (Osterhammel 2005).

[47] After the elimination and forced removal of the Kurdish elites from the East, the Kemalists saw the remaining Kurdish population of peasants, nomads, and city-dwellers as 'raw material' for the Turkish nation. The Kurds were 'future Turks',<sup>44</sup> an anonymous and memoryless mass that would metamorphose easily through a sustained process of forced assimilation. The government believed that if Turkish supplanted existing languages, all existing non-Turkish Muslim minorities would assimilate into Turkish culture. In the eastern provinces, with its complex cultural and socio-economic mosaic and bewilderingly diverse array of tongues, this was quite a challenge. The Ministry of Education was to hold children in its powerfully assimilationist embrace and the newly established nationalist institution called 'People's House' (*Halkevi*) would gear Turkish identity and Kemalist ideology to the popular audience (Çeçen 1990). Within months all over Turkey, especially in the eastern provinces, the Houses spread in major cities, provincial towns, and larger villages. At establishment, inspectors from Diyarbakir province reported that people spoke Kurdish, Zaza, and Arabic in their homes, in the bazaar, in the coffeehouse, and even in the People's House, and solicited their superiors for measures that would 'eradicate the deplorable influence of these cultures and render our national culture and mother tongue dominant'.<sup>45</sup> These social engineering policies continued as long as the Kemalists stayed in power, and made them thoroughly unpopular and hated by a large majority of the population (Zürcher 1995: 254). Only when the Young Turks lost power in the elections of 1950 their high-modernist projects of social engineering were halted. By that time, the human map of Eastern Turkey had been radically altered.

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<sup>44</sup> Brilliantly formulated in: Mesut Yeğen, 'Turkish nationalism and the Kurdish question', in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol.30, no.1 (2007), pp.119-151.

<sup>45</sup> *BCA*, 490.01/1006.882.1, RPP Inspector Kemal Güngör to RPP General Secretariat, 10 November 1940.

## V. Discussion

[48] A balance sheet of the Young Turk era presents a sobering view. Between the years 1913-1950 more than a million people were destroyed and many more exiled, deported, interned, taken hostage, victimized, ostracized, or subjected in other ways to (violent) forms of social engineering. Although violence existed all throughout Ottoman and Turkish history, never before and never after have so many people in the eastern provinces been subjected to so much violence in modern Middle Eastern history. The Young Turks, themselves traumatized, have in their turn scarred the lives and memories of millions of people. This article has meant to give serious consideration to the notion that the Young Turk era is marked by a continuity of inextricably linked population policies. Such a wider interpretational scope as argued in this article allows us to view the Armenian genocide as 'only' one in many stages of nationalist homogenization, in a broader palette of social engineering in the Young Turk era.

[49] It seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that in the Young Turk era, population policies in the eastern provinces were not regarded as 'ordinary' government of a population, but as a vehicle for forcible 'Turkification' of a geography and population perceived as alien. Top-level government officials declared innumerable times that the East needed to be 'Turkified' by hook or by crook, *i.e.* through destruction, expulsion, and forced assimilation. It would be incorrect to associate population politics based on biological-racial thought with coercion, extremism, and violence, but population politics based on sociological, non-essentialist ideas with moderation.<sup>46</sup> The Young Turk conduct of population politics demonstrates that this is a misleading distinction. Sociological population politics never meant voluntarism and could be as coercive and violent as an outright racist one. In the cultural realm, the Young Turks pursued a most ruthless policy of nation formation as socialization could be a process so coerced that 'Turkishness' was often beaten into people (Kieser 2006: 158). This already surfaces in the language of the Young Turk regimes' cultural and linguistic policies. It is not the relatively moderate language found in Eugen Weber's study of the same type of policies in Southern France (Weber 1976), but the colonial one of American Indian boarding schools (Adams 1995) or perhaps even the overtly destructive language discernible

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<sup>46</sup> This argument has also been made in the Soviet case: Holquist 2003: 19-45.

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in Nazi Germany's cultural policies in occupied Eastern Europe. It is terminology such as 'extermination' or 'eradication' of cultures, languages, and ultimately peoples perceived as alien and inferior that strikes one as exclusionist and violent.

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