Nationalism and European Integration

The Need for New Theoretical and Empirical Insights

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Chapter Eleven

Furor against the West: Nationalism as the Dangerous Underbelly of Modern Turkey

Fatma Müge Göçek

The recent October 2006 decision of the lower house of the French parliament to adopt a law criminalizing the denial that the killing of Armenians by Ottoman Turks in 1915 (and following years) amounted to genocide generated a furor in Turkey: the French consulate in Istanbul was pelted with rotten eggs, French goods boycotted, and a motion passed in the Turkish parliament claiming instead that what the French state once did in Algeria amounted to genocide. That same day came the announcement that the prestigious Nobel Prize for literature was bestowed, for the first time in its history, to a Turk, to the author Orhan Pamuk. This produced a similar uproar in the Turkish media: many editorials accused the Nobel Committee for giving the award not on the merit of Pamuk’s literary works, but for the political statement he had made to a Swiss newspaper about the massacres in Turkish history of 30,000 Kurds and one million Armenians, for which he had subsequently been tried and acquitted at a local court for “insulting Turkishness.” Another target of such Turkish nationalism was the ruling Justice and Development Party as it stood accused in the media for “selling out national interests” in its willingness to discuss the status of Cyprus as a part of Turkey’s ongoing membership negotiations with the European Union (EU); this mounting nationalist pressure caused the party to take a negative stand on the permission, as stipulated by the EU, to be given to the Greek Cypriot-flagged vessels to enter Turkey’s ports, thereby bringing Turkey’s membership negotiations with the EU to a standstill.

In this chapter I first assess the current Turkish-EU relations in general, and then the dynamics of nationalism within Turkey, which has recently emerged as a major impediment to EU membership in particular. I then proceed to sociologically analyze the historical emergence of this nationalism and conclude with the hope that it would one day be replaced by a multiculturalism more suitable both for membership in the EU as well as for recognition of the ethnic and religious diversity in Turkey. Before proceeding, however, I recognize that it is not Turkish nationalism alone that impedes the EU membership process; the EU has also contributed to Turkey’s pulling away from the negotiations. Turkey, located primarily in Asia, with a 99 percent Muslim population, is ethnically, culturally, and religiously unlike any other

EU member. Not only has it historically, conceptually, or culturally never been considered a part of Europe; it also has been defined in opposition to Europe as the “Orient,” often to set Europe apart from it. This initial distinction and the legacy of the ensuing European imperialism throughout the world have resulted in 15 million Muslims currently living in the various EU countries. The problems faced by the EU in integrating these Muslims undoubtedly make the challenge of an additional 70 million from the less economically developed Turkey daunting. In addition, membership would make Turkey immediately rise in size within the EU to take second place after Germany, and perhaps first place in the next decade, given population projections—a rank that would immediately cause Turkey to become a major player. In this chapter I do not discuss such EU-generated factors that have also hindered the process of Turkey’s candidacy for membership in the EU.

1. CURRENT CONTEXT: TURKEY AND EU NEGOTIATIONS ON THE VERGE OF COLLAPSE DUE TO NATIONALISM

After having first applied for membership to the EU in 1963 and waited for admission for more than four decades, Turkey is now on the verge of ceasing negotiations. The level of frustration in Turkey has reached such a degree that according to recent polls only 14 percent of Turks actually think Turkey will ever be admitted to the EU; the support for EU membership in the past two years has fallen from 85 to 63 percent. In addition, according to a July 2005 opinion poll, 66 percent of the Turks still believe that “Western countries want to disintegrate Turkey like they disintegrated the Ottoman Empire in the past,” and 54 percent think that “the reforms required by the EU are similar to those required by the Treaty of Sevres, which dismembered [the] Ottoman Empire in 1919.” Given this mind-set, it would not be surprising if the public approval of Turkey’s pursuit of EU membership continues to drop while the time to achieve membership continues to rise.

I started the chapter with three recent incidents that triggered a nationalist furor in Turkey and escalated negative Turkish public attitudes toward Europe and the West because they contain three attributes that are sociologically significant: first, the reactions encompass almost the entirety of the population, including segments that initially had a pro-European, pro-Western stand, signifying for the first time the emergence of a society-wide naturalized nationalist reaction against the EU. Second, these incidents also contain a very strong emotive component, which renders rational public discussion of Turkey’s candidacy for EU membership almost impossible; the lack of such discussion in turn hinders the development of a public sphere in Turkey, which is so necessary for the democratization process. And third, these incidents are all caused by the same origins in that they all emerge as a consequence of Turkey’s failure to come to terms with its own history; they all point
to the unresolved issues that primarily the Turkish state but also Turkish society have had with the minority groups of Armenians, Greeks, and Kurds, issues that have been constantly tugged under the amnesic blanket of Turkish nationalism.

Here I contend that these three attributes generating the furor jeopardizing EU membership of Turkey are the end result of the particular conceptualization, practice, and reproduction of Turkish nationalism. Specifically, the manner in which the Turkish state initially established popular sovereignty in the name of an imagined nation that did not exist, then practiced this nationalism through a "collective myth" based on minority exclusion, and finally kept reproducing nationalist sentiments through the employment of nationalist history writing in mass education—all this generated the current nationalist furor in Turkey that so impedes its possible EU membership. I hope that uncovering this historical process will be the first step toward its replacement with a multiculturalism that will make Turkey not only more amenable to membership in the EU, but also toward its own ethnic and religious populace as well.

2. CONCEPTUALIZING TURKISH NATIONALISM: ESTABLISHING STATE SOVEREIGNTY IN THE NATION'S NAME

While Friedrich Meincke was one of the first historians to fundamentally differentiate political nations from cultural ones, Hans Kohn went a step further by assigning a geographical attribute to this difference. Even though nationalism was primarily political in the West, in the socially and politically more backward areas of Central and Eastern Europe and Asia, it struggled to redraw the political boundaries in conformity with ethnographic demands and was therefore primarily cultural. Put another way, in the West the state preceded the nation; in the East the nation preceded the state. More recent studies take issue with this rather Orientalist divide and argue instead that all nationalisms combine both elements within them: often the French revolutionary ideals of popular sovereignty and early German romantic notions of an organically developed and classified society combine to produce nationalism.7

Turkish nationalism is no exception to this conceptualization in that, like all others, Turkish nationalism that extends back into the Ottoman Empire is also rooted in both the French (popular sovereignty) and German (romantic) traditions. The first instances of nationalism in the Ottoman Empire that preceded and set the stage for Turkish nationalism were certainly based on French conceptions of popular sovereignty.8 It was indeed the struggle to establish popular sovereignty and constitutional rule in the Ottoman Empire that had initially compelled the Young Turks to challenge the autocracy of the Ottoman sultan. In so doing, they challenged the existing conception that the domains of the empire were the property of the sultan, where people existed as his subjects. They instead contended that these domains formed the patrie (vatani) of Ottoman citizens.9 Even though Turkism as an ideology also existed alongside Ottomanism, it initially did not have much popular appeal.10

The Young Turks established constitutional rule in 1908 and seized power directly through a coup in 1913. They failed, however, to put a constitutional rule into effect to establish popular sovereignty and thereby guarantee equal rights to all the subjects of the empire. They failed to do so because the Ottoman Constitution could not attain the symbolic legitimacy of the sultan it had so forcefully replaced. As a consequence, the German romantic conceptions of the sacredness of the state and patrie as it appealed to the dominant social group in the empire, the Turks, started to gain more purchase. The Balkan wars and the ensuing World War I also served as concomitant factors that increased this tendency. The lack of legitimacy necessitated the employment of violence and military power to maintain social order in the Ottoman Empire.

In whose name, however, was the popular sovereignty for which the Young Turks had seized power to be established? Since most of the Young Turk leaders were educated in Europe, trained at Western-style schools of the empire, or influenced by the new ideas emanating from the West, they eventually made the German romantic conceptions of sacrificing oneself for the patrie synonymous with the preservation of the Ottoman state.11 At first the basis of popular sovereignty and the state was provided by the legal framework of the new constitution that the Young Turks had tried so hard to introduce in the empire. Yet, since its legitimacy proved so hard to secure, and the empire kept shrinking through revolts and wars, and the various Ottoman communities within the empire started to discuss and debate disparate visions of the future,12 the Young Turks started to resort to violence to maintain their rule. A small ruling circle within them started the search for a final homeland, specifically for the Turks in Anatolia.13

At this crucial point a fundamental twist occurred in the emergence of Turkish nationalism: rather than the German conceptualization of an organic growth of a state by an ethnic group, what happened instead was that the Young Turks who controlled the Ottoman state socially engineered the production in Anatolia of their own ethnie through two measures: (1) in collaboration with the Kurds, the ethnic cleansing (killing) of indigenous Anatolian peoples, mainly Armenians, along with Greeks, Assyrians, Arabs, and others;14 and (2) in their stead the resettling of remnants of the Balkan Turks, who had been partially massacred and forced out of the Balkans shortly before this period.15

As the Turkish state uniquely constructed its own nation, the state and nation became one and the same, and as a consequence it was not, contrary to expectations, the people who assumed popular sovereignty, but instead
the state. Likewise, after the transition to the Turkish Republic, even though there was indeed, after the French model, a legal constitutional framework that bestowed popular sovereignty to the people, since the Turkish nation had been organically created by the state, sovereignty continued to rest with the state. Since sovereignty was so closely associated with the state, it was no accident that the eternal guardianship of that sovereignty and therefore of the Turkish people was assumed by the military. Here lies the historical origin and root of the difficulty faced by the emerging Turkish civil society as it tried to wrest itself away from the Turkish state's ethnic nationalism.

I now need to further articulate the nature of the ethnic nationalism of the Turkish state. Even though some scholars separate nationalism into its civic and ethnic components, differentiate between nationalism and patriotism, and then defend civic nationalism and patriotism for their capacity to unite groups of people—and even though civic nationalism and patriotism may indeed be able to create an affective bond to laws and constitutions that can be subject to rational judgment and negotiated by human reason—the conceptions of these scholars have nevertheless all been until now more of an ideal rather than realistically sustainable. Will Kymlicka observes that in practice “virtually all liberal democracies have...attempted to diffuse a single societal culture throughout all of its territory.” This has also been the case for Turkey: even though the Turkish constitution guarantees civic rights to all its citizens, including the minorities, which would thereby theoretically qualify it as having civic nationalism, the practice reveals the hegemony of the dominant Turkish ethnic majority. As also recently recognized, political leaders carried out “the leveling of diversity and the folklorizing of minorities. In the garb of civic inclusion, the institutions of the state became vehicles for the majority... Ethno-religious state policies...at the heart of national identity, state building and the division of public resources...also served to diminish diversity. The dream of a modern civic state turned coercive.”

Another term employed by scholars to refer to the kind of nationalism in Turkey is that of “constitutional nationalism,” in this case emphasizing the perfect one-on-one mapping of the state and the nation; even though the Turkish state is democratic in form, it nevertheless embodies a single nation. By equating citizenship with identity, the Turkish state “mixes national and civic ideas leaving the distinction between a Rousseau-influenced community and a German-influenced organic nation ambiguous.” As a consequence of this ambiguity, the minorities in Turkey are unacknowledged, subsumed, and often hegemonized, and the dominance of the Sunni Muslim majority is naturalized. It is therefore no accident that even though the Turkish state officially recognizes the non-Muslim minorities whose rights are legally protected by the Lausanne treaty, it discriminates against them in practice since their presence in society is not at all acknowledged and is actually actively silenced.

As a consequence of this discrimination, their numbers have dramatically declined both before and also during the Republican period.

Statistics indicate that even though the 1905 Ottoman census stated the non-Muslim minorities as comprising nearly a fifth of the subjects living within the boundaries of present-day Turkey—with 10 percent Greek, 7 percent Armenian, and 1 percent Jewish populations—the first official census of the Turkish Republic, conducted two decades later, in 1927, revealed that the non-Muslims then comprised only 3 percent of the total population. Today, the non-Muslim minorities have dwindled down to 60,000 Armenian Orthodox, 25,000 Jews, 3,000 Greek Orthodox, and 10,000 Syrian Orthodox, together accounting for less than 1 percent of Turkey’s total population of approximately 70 million. The ideological component of this ethnic nationalism of the Turkish state founded through the equation of the state with the Sunni Muslim nation was based on a collective myth that excluded the minorities from the nation by explicitly referring to them as “aliens” and “foreigners.”

3. PRACTICING TURKISH NATIONALISM: CREATING A COLLECTIVE MYTH THROUGH MINORITY EXCLUSION

Scholars observe that history and its recollection become especially crucial to nationalist projects because the remembrance of the past enables a collectivity to acquire a national identity that unites them through shared meaning. Yet the construction of a national identity through the recollection of the past was especially daunting in the case of the Turkish Republic since it was built on a disintegrating empire, which had frequent episodes of violence and trauma, the most significant of which was the ethnic cleansing of the Ottoman Armenians beginning in 1915. To building the Turkish nation, the Republican leaders made a conscious decision to concentrate on the future, on progress, on catching up with the contemporary civilization signified by the West; the past was consciously omitted and repressed. After the achievement of sovereignty, this focus on the future was officially defined as the second aim of Atatürk nationalism. Such an aim enabled the Turkish state elite not only to deemphasize past incidents of violence and trauma, but also to delegitimize a possible return to the previous Ottoman form of government.

Still, since nationalism is predicated on building a narrative for the nation, the newly constructed Turkish nation was in need of an official narrative. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk single-handedly provided such a narrative with his famous Speech (Nütük), where he delivered an autobiographical account of the creation of the Turkish nation that commenced with his alighting in Samsun on May 19, 1919, to start the War of Independence. At the second convention of the Republican People’s Party, in a delivery during October 15–20, 1927, going on for six days and 36.5 hours, Mustafa Kemal narrated...
how the Turkish Independence Struggle created the Turkish nation.\textsuperscript{28} This narration identified and legitimated him as the primary founder of the Turkish nation and underscored the unique singularity of the Turkish experience as a self-contained case.

The state then officially adopted Mustafa Kemal's text as the official Turkish national narrative and then sacralized it: any subsequent critical analyses that would “insult the memory of Atatürk” were legally criminalized. Especially the inability of Turkish society to critically engage this text or even to consider and discuss alternate formulations—this inability has increased the societal tendencies not only to imagine the past, in the sense suggested by Benedict Anderson,\textsuperscript{29} but also to mythologize it. What was to have been a “collective memory” of the past eventually transformed instead, especially after the death of Mustafa Kemal, into a “collective myth.”\textsuperscript{30} Turkish society was presented with a simplified and whitewashed version of past events, loosely based though always legitimated by Atatürk’s Speech, told from the selective viewpoint of the Turkish nation and its struggle for nationhood.

What actually comprises this Turkish collective myth? It is one Turkey being created from the ashes of the disintegrated Ottoman Empire, against the aggression of Western imperialist forces of England, France, and Russia, who deliberately instigate the non-Muslim minorities, particularly the Ottoman Greek and Armenian subjects, to rebel. Mustafa Kemal then emerges as the hero in 1919, to fight the National War of Independence against all odds, and erects a Turkish Republic in 1923 on the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. The nationally celebrated and commemorated historical events therefore are May 19, 1919, when he starts the War of Independence, August 30, 1922, when he wins the final battle of victory against the occupying Greek forces, and October 29, 1923, when he proclaims the Turkish Republic.\textsuperscript{11} In all the national commemorations of these events that have occurred since then,\textsuperscript{32} the past is reenacted, and Turkish national identity and cohesiveness is thus reaffirmed. The role of the Turkish military in these events and its subsequent role in guaranteeing and guarding the Republic are also duly noted and stressed.

What also marks this collective remembrance of the past is the hollowness of time: all significant events are frozen in time to the mythologized, sacralized “golden era of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk” during 1919–38. It is as if nothing of significance has taken place in the intervening seven decades or since then;\textsuperscript{13} it is as if Turkey’s state and society forever live and derive the meaning for their existence from that time and in the context of world events as they happened back then. As a consequence, one should not be surprised at the emergence of the “Sevres syndrome” in Turkey during the current negotiations with the EU. Turkish national memory is still indexed to the creation myth of its republic, to what the national discourse has perceived as the negative role of the Western powers in this process, as they drew up the Treaty of Sevres to disintegrate the Ottoman Empire and destroy the Turks. In Turkish national memory, time is frozen at the creation of the Turkish Republic.

Tzetan Todorov observes\textsuperscript{34} in particular that “when commemoration freezes into permanent forms that cannot be changed without cries of sacrilege, we can be certain that it serves the particular interests of their defenders and not their moral edification.” Indeed, we should always view narratives that emerge during such commemorations in the context of relations of power and logics of dominance. Keeping these collective myths intact also helps to keep the Turkish state elite in power. Yet Turkish society cannot fully comprehend how this power hegemony is reproduced through the collective myth because the society itself has been totally immersed in and socialized by such commemorative rituals throughout the entire duration of the Republic.

On this formulation of the Turkish collective myth, however, there are two caveats that have the potential to ultimately destabilize it: temporality and the presence of those silenced by it. Based on Walter Benjamin’s formulation that the nation lives in homogenous empty time, one purposefully flattened out to extend from time immemorial into infinity, Benedict Anderson proposes\textsuperscript{35} that nationalism needs to fill this emptiness with meaning and therefore has to “imagine a community”: the national storytelling of the past are attempts to fulfill exactly this function. Homi Bhabha further develops this argument as he explains\textsuperscript{36} why the ensuing narrative of the nation is split into “double time,” whereby society has to be continually educated about the past: On one hand the nation “is always in the making, in a process of historical progress, not yet fully developed to fulfill the nation’s destiny.” On the other hand “one’s unity, permanent identification with the nation, has to be constantly signified, repeated and performed.” There is thus this constant state of incompleteness and dissatisfaction that envelops the collective myth, one that can only be overcome through its constant repetition.

When applied to the Turkish case, the incompleteness of the task of reaching “perfect” nationhood gives the Turkish state and its elites the necessary power and legitimacy over society to sustain and reproduce their rule; it enables them to repeat the same commemorations successfully time and again. Yet dialectically the same hollowness of meaning that warrants such repetition also produces ambivalence and dissatisfaction within Turkish society, a constant feeling of being unfulfilled by the existing state of affairs. This feeling that something is not right, this sense that what Atatürk's aspired for his nation, to become truly Westernized, is never within reach—these feelings escalate the levels of Turkish society’s frustration. Some of the frustration that recently surfaced in the form of a furor is partially due to this condition as well.

As Ernest Renan\textsuperscript{17} once astutely observed, not only does the nation need a sense of longevity sustained by a collective myth, but also amnesia regarding
the violence of its birth and existence up to the present. Amnesia is needed because nationalism is after all predicated upon the twin principles of “remembering and forgetting.” Who are forgotten, silenced, and excluded from the collective myth of the Turkish Republic? These exactly correspond to the three social groups involved in the recent nationalist furor, the Armenians, Kurds, and the Greeks, who comprise the past and present minorities in Turkey. Indeed, violence against the minorities at the inception and during the Republican era has been totally eliminated from the Turkish collective myth. The massacres of various minorities in Anatolia up to the present, the state-backed pogroms against minorities on September 6–7, 1955, as well as the Thrace incident of 1934, forced military service and the wealth tax of 1942, and subsequent formal and informal discrimination against both the non-Muslim and Muslim minorities—these are all conveniently overlooked.

Yet some contemporary scholars such as İsmail Beşikçi, Rifat Bali, Ahmet Yıldız, Ayhan Aktaş, Çağatay M. Okutan, and Nazan Maksudyan have recently started to challenge this national collective myth through historical research. These developments have occurred both as a consequence of internal development pressures such as the increased level of education in Turkey, as well as external forces such as the loosening of control over the freedom of research in preparing Turkey’s candidacy for EU membership. As a consequence, there is now ample evidence of the discriminatory practices of the Turkish state. Still, the Turkish state elite involved in the upkeep of the national collective myth always step in to maintain the status quo, and they do so through a series of denials. They deny that the recent studies are scientific and dismiss them as being “subversive and divisive.” They deny that the Ottoman Armenians were massacred and try to marginalize this violent event by pointing to the latter’s collaboration with Western imperialist forces, and to the many Muslims who were also massacred before and during World War I. In so doing, they legitimate the actions taken as necessary for the survival of the Turkish nation. They deny charges of discrimination against the minorities in Turkey by pointing to people of Kurdish origin in high bureaucratic positions, without realizing that such minorities can reach those positions only when they either give up or hide their minority identity. The underlying theme behind such denials by the Turkish state elite is the preservation of the ethnic Turkish majority’s domination. Yet such fervent denial of the violence in the Turkish nation’s past and such staunch defense of the collective myth irrevocably corrode the moral fabric of Turkish society. Since the state and society never become publicly cognizant of and ethically accountable for their violence, that violence becomes more naturalized into the social system and practiced against all groups, further hindering the Turkish democratization process. The grip of the military over state and society subsequently tightens.

This staunch defense of the Turkish collective myth by the Turkish state elite is also executed in a strongly emotive manner. In analyzing the dynamics of such reactions, Anne-Marie Fortier has formulated the concept of “pride politics” to refer to instances where dissent to a particular stand is not confronted, challenged, and defeated rationally on its own terms but, through its swift removal to the emotional sphere, is instead undermined, subverted, and eventually not addressed. In particular, she observes that “by [thus] turning dissent into a shameful act, the very possibility of thinking of dissent not only as a democratic act, but [also] as an act of national attachment is undermined. The issue at stake in dismissing dissent as an unpatriotic act is the preservation of the stories of a national identity; dissent here should not be tied to ideas that shake the national story. In addition, the scorn against the unpatriotic dissident is also about the maintenance of a guilt-free national story.” Hence, immediately removing the public discourse from the rational to the emotional sphere enables the state elite to prevent any criticism of the collective myth.

In the Turkish case, the scholars who try to start a public discussion on the events of the past are likewise unable to engage in any rational discourse because the state elite who safeguard the Turkish collective myth often vilify and brand them as “traitors stabbing the nation in the back” and swiftly move them to the emotional sphere. Yet this constant practice of such “pride politics” in Turkey, leveling angry accusations of treason against those who empirically and scientifically study its silenced minorities, only slows down Turkey’s democratization process. Since not much rational discourse can take place in the Turkish public sphere, there is inadequate rational knowledge produced; and without adequate rational knowledge, Turkish state and society fail to shed the collective myth that envelopes them and continue to steadily fall behind the empirical and scientific research conducted throughout the rest of the world. The fissures in the collective myth increase unaddressed while the capacity of the Turkish state elite and the society to deal with these fissures does not improve over time. As both parties become more incapable of dealing with the increasing fissures in the collective myth, their level of tolerance decreases while their emotional agitation escalates.

4. REPRODUCING TURKISH NATIONALISM: LEGITIMIZING COLLECTIVE EMOTION THROUGH NATIONALIST HISTORY WRITING IN MASS EDUCATION

After the emergence of nationalism as a political ideology in the West during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, state actors increasingly involved themselves in nationalist history writing as they realized the significance of the use of history in constructing nations. In the name of serving the nation first and foremost, nationalist history writing would deliberately, systematically,
and intentionally highlight certain historical facts and suppress others. As a consequence, a historical narrative constructed in this manner did not present an argument but instead merely presented a certain interpretation of historical events as facts. Nachman Ben-Yehuda provides the best description of the functions of nationalist writing:46 it contains "in addition to an impressive site, an attitude of sacredness, a high degree of symbolization, a dimension of moralism, of an instructive lesson, a frequent demand for action from the audience, a conscious selectivity of events and disregard for others, a simple narrative where the good and bad are evident." It thus presents a highly selective sequence of historical events, with the intent "to create attitudes, stir emotions, and help construct particular social realities." Not only is a particular version of the past legitimized as immutable truth, but the challenging of that version is also short-circuited through the introduction of an emotive component.

Nationalist history writing had great affect because it involved a people moved by a story about their origin, identity, and traditions, a story that they told themselves and others. It was particularly through the German romantic model of nationalism47 that nationalist history writing produced its finest products; in all, however, as George Mosse ironically observes,48 "the veiling and subduing of the past through myth and symbols occurred at the expense of truth and justice." What solely dictated the act of writing history was success or failure, and such pragmatism in the act was further demonstrated by the fact that this propaganda excluded discussion with its enemies and their point of view. The appeal was directed not at "[people's] reason, but their emotions, their subconscious drives."49 Arthur Stinchcombe further articulates this emotive component of nationalist history writing as he comments50 on how it involves feelings of love and hate, containing "a wish to suppress internal divisions within the nation and to define people outside the group untrustworthy as allies and implacably evil as enemies. . . . [fostering] a spirit of distrust of potential treason of any opposition within the group and a hatred of strangers." Those who write the nation's history are often not professional or academic scholars, but rather are amateurs with a common narrative style of "frequent vagueness and imprecision of formulation, almost inanimate repetitiveness, and patriotic sentimentality."51

In the West, it was only with the violence of the two world wars and the Holocaust that scholars turned a critical lens onto the endeavor of science and the evil that humans could bring upon themselves. This has led to the emergence of critical social analysis in general and its application to nationalist history writing in particular: the application revealed that the nationalist claims of immutable historical truth were predicated on positivist conceptions of scientific objectivity that were now found to be epistemologically problematic because of the human interests embedded in them.52 The state documents on which the arguments were often founded were likewise now viewed not as fixed but rather as socially constructed. In addition, the focus on the larger societal context within which nationalist history writing was interpreted alerted critical theorists to how the emotive component that rendered discussion impossible served the function of polarizing nations and pitting them against one another. In the process, the ideological underpinnings and power relations embedded within the nationalist narrative became transparent. A transformation in history writing in the West first came about as the selective focus on the events and actors was replaced by their contextualization within contemporaneous social, economic, and political conditions. What eventually developed53 was a transcultural history writing that analyzes the specific forms of thinking and writing about history in the various cultures and the relationships between them. The ensuing democratic practice of history writing54 encourages skepticism about dominant views, but at the same time trusts in the reality of the past and its knowability; such a practice is currently presented as the best chance of making sense of the world.

This long discussion of the Western transformation in history writing is necessary as a historical backdrop to comprehend why Turkish state and society are so unable to confront their past, a confrontation so crucial for them to proceed down the arduous path of becoming an EU member. Even though an increasing number of scholars have started to challenge the nationalist history writing of the Turkish state, such a transformation in history writing has not yet occurred in Turkey. This has not happened because mass education and various state-sponsored organizations such as the Turkish Historical Society have for many decades been disseminating this nationalist history. As a consequence, the Turkish people have been kept in total ignorance about what happened in their own past since the nationalist textbooks carefully, systematically, and intentionally replaced historical facts with morally unambiguous tales of Turkish heroism and bravery. Such hollowing of historical information and analysis has: (1) gradually removed Turkey from the social scientific norms and principles to which the international community of scholars adhere, and (2) enabled the Turkish state to hold onto and maintain its scientifically unsound claims concerning, for instance, the denial of the 1915 ethnic cleansing of the Armenians.

The seminal work of Büşra Ersahin Behar55 demonstrates how this process of Turkish nationalist history-writing sponsored by the state took place. She reports that the Turkish official history thesis was formulated at the first Turkish Historical Congress,56 held in 1932. The participants at the congress quickly divided into the nationalist and scientific camps, and the scientific camp lost the ensuing battle, thereby sealing the fate of history writing in Turkey. The subsequent nationalist narrative prioritized political pragmatism over scientific principles and imagined myth over historical truth.57 As a consequence, even though the Turks had arrived in Anatolia much later than all the other social groups such as the Armenians, Greeks, and Assyrians
who had existed there as well and from much earlier periods, the nationalist textbooks imagined and made Turkish society believe in a falsified history that placed the Turks there before everyone else. The scientific study did not develop in Turkey; instead, the Turkish state "subjugated history to serve as the tool of political rule and its short-term aims." ^58

Today this imagined past has become the basis of Turkish national identity. Since Turkish history is taught in total isolation from the scientific standards and values of the rest of the world, Turkish students fail to locate Turkey's history within the world context: a rational discussion of Turkey's past in accordance with the standards of the world's scholarly community proves impossible. In contemporary Turkish society, prioritization of political pragmatism and imagined myth over scientific principles and historical truth therefore continues to advantage ambitious amateur history writers over professionally trained historians: anyone with no formal training can delve into history only to emerge as an "expert" and to publicly challenge, unashamedly and without a single outcry of protest, those who have had years of formal training in the field, and they get away with it. They can get away with it because the Turkish state through its tightly regulated history textbooks has kept so many generations of Turks ignorant of their past, instead promulgating mythologized and emotionally laden narratives. It therefore is no accident that when France passes laws about the Armenian genocide or when Orhan Pamuk wins the Nobel Prize of literature, what is significant to these Turks is determined by what they have been taught by the Turkish state instead of by history. They end up processing the knowledge not in accordance with scientific criteria, but in terms of Turkish ethnic national interest, and therefore they react emotionally.

5. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have argued that the roots of recent Turkish furor against the West in general and the European Union in particular are located in the conceptualization, practice, and reproduction of nationalism by the Turkish state. I have specifically contended that the Turkish state has mapped itself onto a nation, conceptualized a collective myth at the expense of minorities, and hindered scientific historical analysis through nationalist history writing. Even though the Turkish Republic managed in the end to successfully build a nation-state, it did so by burying its past—and the cost of that burial may be escalating nationalism, declining democratization, and declining chances of membership in the EU.
Minority in Greece (Athens: ELIAMEP, 1995). The minority accounts for about one-third of the total population in Thrace (340,000) but under 1 percent of the total national population of 11 million, in the national census of 2001; see http://www.statistics.gr/.

39. The international Treaty of Lausanne (1923) includes a section on the Protection of Minorities, a bilateral agreement between Greece and Turkey containing a series of provisions to guarantee the rights of minority populations exempted from the compulsory exchange. These include a minority bilingual (Greek-Turkish) education system and the institution of Islamic law (sharia; see Law 2345/1920) as a judicial subsystem that exists in parallel to the Greek Civil Code.


41. The main minority political claims include the election of the Mufti directly by the minority population, the management of the Vakf (religious) property of their community, and the right to define themselves collectively as a Turkish ethnic minority; see also K. Tsitselikis, “Η θέση του Μουσουλμάν στην ελληνική εθνική κώστα” [The Position of Muslim in the Greek Legal Order], in Νομικά θέματα θρησκευτικής ετερότητας στην Ελλάδα [Legal Issues of Religious Otherness in Greece], ed. D. Christophoulou (Athens: KEMO & Kritiki, 1999); Anna Paraskevopoulos, “Regional Policy and Minorities in the EU: The Case of Western Thrace in Greece,” (PhD diss., London School of Economics, September 2002). The main cultural demand of the minority is further reform and improvement in the minority education system; see also Nelly Askouli. Η εκπαίδευση της μειονότητας στη Θράκη [Minority Education in Thrace] (Athens: Alexandria, 2006); Lambros Baltiotos, “Ελληνική διοίκηση και μειονοτική εκπαίδευση στην Δυτική Θράκη” [Greek Administration and Minority Education in Western Thrace], in Το μειονοτικό φαινόμενο στην Ελλάδα [The Minority Phenomenon in Greece], ed. Konstantinos Tsitselikis and Dimitris Christophoulou (Athens: Kritiki & KEMO, 1997). 315–48.


44. Tasos Kostopoulos, Η Απαγορευμένη Γλώσσα [The Forbidden Language], (Athens: Mavri Lista, 2003), 59–60.

45. Anagnostou, “Deepening Democracy?”

46. Ibid.


49. Anagnostou, “Deepening Democracy?”

50. Anagnostou and Triandafyllidou, “Regions, Minorities and European Integration.”

51. Ibid.

52. A list of the interviews appears in the chapter’s appendix. For more details on the study, see ibid.

53. Kokosalakis, “Εθνική Ταυτότητα και Ευρώπη,”

54. See also Anagnostou and Triandafyllidou, “Regions, Minorities and European Integration.”

55. Kokosalakis, “Εθνική Ταυτότητα και Ευρώπη.”

56. Ibid., 78–79.

57. Ibid.

58. Anagnostou, “Deepening Democracy?”

59. Kokosalakis, “Εθνική Ταυτότητα και Ευρώπη.”

60. Interview excerpt quoted from ibid., 91.

61. Interview excerpt quoted from ibid., 86.

62. Interview excerpt quoted from ibid., 86.

63. Interview excerpt quoted from ibid., 71.

64. Interview excerpt quoted from ibid., 71.

65. Anagnostou and Triandafyllidou, “Regions, Minorities and European Integration.”

66. Ibid.

11. FUROR AGAINST THE WEST: NATIONALISM AS THE DANGEROUS UNDERBELLY OF MODERN TURKEY


3. Ibid., 65.


5. There is disagreement about the roots of nationalism. For an extensive discussion, refer to Anthony W. Marx, “The Nation-State and Its Exclusion,” Political Science Quarterly 117, no. 1 (2002): 103–4; Bradley Thayer, “Bringing in Darwin: Evolutionary Theory, Realism and Inter-

6. As the history of Western state building is conceptualized as nonnational, civil, republican, and liberal, the non-West is viewed, in contrast, as nondemocratic and irrational.


9. Bahku Ora, *Atatürk Milliyetçiliği: Resmi İdeoloji Dışından İnceleme* [Atatürk Nationalism: An Analysis outside the Official Ideology] (Ankara: Bilgi, 1993), 119–78, argues that the first function of Atatürk nationalism was sovereignty, and since the inception of the Turkish Republic, sovereignty is indeed presented as the most fundamental premise of official ideology.

10. Ibid., 50.

11. Ibid., 54–55.

12. While German unity was attained in 1871, what Bismarck created afterward, during the Second Reich until 1890, was a system of government stressing the power of the state. The German state tried to annex the nationalist dynamic and tame it into respectability. For a fuller discussion see George Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1975), 17. This process was initially taken as a model by the Young Turks, who also assigned priority to the state and advocated the possible coexistence of an emperor and the state.


24. Ibid., 448–49.


30. Duncan S. A. Bell, "Mythscapes: Memory, Mythology and National Identity" *British Journal of Sociology* 54, no. 1 (2003): 65, defines "collective myth" as "the shared understanding, conceptualization, or representation of past events by succeeding generations who have not themselves personally experienced them."

31. The only other significant event is that of mourning the death of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, on November 10, 1938. That anniversary is not as fervently celebrated because it is a day of mourning: yet to emphasize that Atatürk is immortal, on that day the Turkish state elite always proclaims, "He is still and always will be alive in our hearts."

32. In this context one needs to further apply to the Turkish case the concept of the discursive space that Duncan S. A. Bell, "Mythscapes: Memory, Mythology and National Identity," *British Journal of Sociology* 54, no. 1 (2003): 63, terms "mythscapes": the "temporally and spatially extended discursive realm in which the myths of the nation are forged, transmitted, negotiated and reconstructed constantly." Through such commemorations, the Turkish collective myth is likewise produced and reproduced throughout society and the world in an attempt to sustain "Turkish" identity and with it the status quo.


35. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.


38. As Anthony W. Marx, "The Nation-State and Its Exclusion," *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 1 (2002): 113, observes, exclusion occurs when the state elite decide "who to include, reward and encourage loyalty from as the core constituency. To identify and consolidate the core, [they] manipulate established antagonisms against some other groups thereby excluded." This exclusion is often not class based because the state elites need the income generated by these groups.

39. I define "minorities" as social groups who do not share equally in the power distribution of a society. Even though some present-day Kurds do not consider themselves to be a minority group and are not officially defined as such by the Turkish state, they would sociologically comprise a minority because they do not share equally in the distribution of resources in Turkish society.

40. Also eliminated are the frequent interventions of the military in Turkish democracy through a series of military coups in 1960, 1971, 1980, and the soft coup in 1997.


42. For instance, Kemal Kiris, "Disaggregating Turkish Citizenship and Immigration Practices," *Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 3 (2000): 1–22, notes that in allowing immigration into the country, the Turkish state selected Muslims of the dominant Hanefite sect, who spoke Turkish and rejected others like Armenians of Anatolian descent; Soner Çağaptay, "Reconfiguring the Turkish Nation in the 1930s," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 8, no. 2 (2003): 67–82, demonstrates that the same state turned Turkification into an active state policy, thereby developing stringent sanctions against non-Muslim minorities in the 1930s. Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi*, illustrates how the state in the 1940s forced a wealth transfer to Muslims by levying special taxes against wealthy non-Muslim minorities.
43. Such ethnic discrimination is most rigorously practiced by the Turkish military, which has never had a single ethnically or religiously diverse high-ranking officer since the inception of the republic.


45. The problem is also inherent to history writing in general: while it proceeds from empirically validated facts or events, it necessarily requires the intervention of imagination to place them into a coherent story, a process during which fictional elements enter into the historical narrative. Indeed, Hayden V. White, “The Fictions of Factual Representation,” in Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 123, observes that before the French Revolution, history writing was “conventionally regarded as a literary art. More specifically, it was regarded as a branch of rhetoric and its ‘fictive’ nature generally recognized. . . . Many kinds of truth, even history, could be presented to the reader only by fictional techniques of representation.” Likewise, Michel de Certeau, The Writing of History (New York, 1988), xxviii, states: “Historiography (that is, ‘history’ and ‘writing’) bears within its own name the paradox—almost an oxymoron—of a relation established between two antinomic terms, between: the real and discourse.”


47. Margaret Mehl, History and the State in Nineteenth-Century Japan (Houndmills, UK: Macmillan, 1998), 154, articulates how Germany exemplifies the relationship between the rise of nationalism and historical scholarship in nineteenth-century Europe. In Germany, romantic nationalism, which emerged under the influence of European romanticism, was particularly strong. History in particular served to define the identity of a nation and emphasize its uniqueness.


49. Ibid., 12.


52. Jürgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests (Boston: Beacon, 1971).


56. The purpose of history for the new Turkish nation was defined as “the formation of a strong national consciousness based on pre-Ottoman eras.” An ancient Turkish history in Central Asian lands and in Anatolia in even more ancient times was created, and the study of immediate Ottoman history was silenced, also to delegitimize a possible return to Ottoman polity and identity: ibid., 12.

57. In one camp were the nationalist historians comprising the very young scholar Afer İnan, a protégé of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk himself, who could not deviate from the political mission in spite of her history education: the young archaeologist Hasan Cemil Çambel, also an officer and likewise a protégé of Mustafa Kemal; Samih Rifat, without any formal training and not even a high school graduate, but a political appointee as the deputy to the Turkish Parliament from Çanakkale; and Semeddin Gündaltay, also a politician, who had studied natural sciences in Lausanne and later developed an interest in writing Turkish history from an ethnic perspective. In the other camp were Fuad Köprüli, Sadri Maksudi Arslan, Zeki Velidi Togan, and Ahmet Refik Altnay, all formally trained and eminent historians, who favored approaching the past scientifically: ibid., 126–57.

58. Historians became the vanguards of the state, serving the state’s interests: the textbooks these nationalist historians wrote reflected the state’s priorities as well. Behar argues that this approach is still dominant in Turkey to this day. Indeed, the Turkish history textbooks, in providing the history of the Anatolian homeland of the Turks, ought to cover the histories of the Armenian, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, and Kurdish cultures and civilizations, but they fail to do so.

12. RELATING NATIONALISM TO EUROPEAN INTEGRATION