

HISTORY, POLITICS and FOREIGN POLICY IN TURKEY

Edited by

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YOUNG SCHOLARS ON TURKEY

YOUNG SCHOLARS ON TURKEY BOOK SERIES

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

This collection of essays, which covers a wide range of issues related to Turkish politics, history and foreign policy, was written by a distinguished group of young scholars, most of whom presented their papers as part of the Young Scholars on Turkey Conference. The selection of essays is intended to illuminate Turkey's current politics and foreign policy as well as provide new insights into its historical background and identity debates. Both the Young Scholars on Turkey lecture series and its conference attracted the attention of an informed and enthusiastic audience of both established professionals and other young scholars. In order to create a volume that brought together some of these articles, we began to work on this collection in the summer of 2011. The articles were revised by the authors themselves with suggestions from the editors and prepared for publication. During the preparation of this volume, our copy-editor Nathania Ustun demonstrated invaluable dedication to the work. In addition, Maggie Simon worked diligently on the standardization of the text and citations and Ümare Yazar from SETA's office in Ankara showed both patience and commitment in bearing with a first-time editor like myself. I hope the volume will be the first step in a long series of Young Scholars programs and lead to further collaboration of academia and think tank world in the field of Turkish studies. I would like to extend my profound gratitude to each of the contributors, to Nuh Yılmaz and Kadir Ustun for bringing me in on this very special undertaking, to Omer Ozbek for his help in the management of the publication process and to Taha Ozhan for his support and encouragement throughout this endeavor.

Kılıç Buğra Kanat
Washington, D.C.

INTRODUCTION

The Young Scholars on Turkey (YSOT) program, co-sponsored by the SETA Foundation at Washington D.C. and the Institute of Turkish Studies (ITS) at Georgetown University, completed its first year with an international conference in April 15, 2011. This volume draws on articles submitted by scholars who have presented their work to the Washington D.C. audience as part of the YSOT program.

The main idea driving the conception of the program was manifold. First, it aimed to bridge the gap between the academic world and the policy world in discussions on Turkey. Second, the program was intended to contribute to the depth of policy discussions on Turkey specifically in the think tank world by relying on already accumulated academic knowledge. Third, it strove to offer fresh perspectives on Turkey by engaging academics at the beginning of their careers.

This was definitely an ambitious project as it attempted to engage early-career scholars in the policy conversation. This was a difficult challenge because of the rapid pace of policy discussions compared to longer-term academic endeavors. The scholars we engaged often required much longer deadlines than we were willing to offer them. It was our challenge to make often highly specialized academic knowledge “policy-relevant” for our audience. It was also a highly rewarding experience as we witnessed true contributions being made to the policy conversation on Turkey.

As you will see in the content of this volume, we found that the academic research interests in various fields, including political science, international relations, history, sociology etc. are not necessarily far removed from the policy discussions. Many scholars focused on domestic issues such as Islamism and the Kurdish question and Turk-

ish domestic policy discussions often address these topics as well. In terms of foreign policy, much of the academic discussions focused on Turkey's relations with the EU and the EU accession process. It proved more difficult to find scholars who were engaged in Turkish foreign policy with respect to Turkey's relations with the U.S. or with the Middle East. This clearly correlates with Turkey's foreign policy outlook to some extent as its relations with the U.S. and the Middle East have just begun to be scrutinized over the past couple of years more closely. Especially after the Arab Spring, there has been a lot of policy discussion on Turkey's policies towards Middle Eastern countries and we can expect more academic interest in this area in the near future.

Over the course of the 2010-2011 academic year, the YSOT program organized a total of nine individual sessions where individual scholars presented their research findings along with policy recommendations in Washington D.C. The year 2010 was not a particularly easy one for U.S.-Turkey relations, which made the program even more interesting and relevant for the U.S. audience. We have received a lot of encouragement and feedback from our co-sponsors, presenters, conference participants as well as the broader audience. Based on the reaction so far, we can claim that the Young Scholars on Turkey Program reached its goals to a great extent in its first year.

We would like to thank Nuh Yılmaz and İbrahim Kalın for the conception of this program. Mr. Yılmaz, as the co-Director of the YSOT program, directed, guided, and supported this program in all its stages. We would like to thank the former co-directors of the YSOT program, Ufuk Ulutaş and Talha Köse. Ömer Özbek deserves special praise for his help with the organization of the program and the conference. We would like to thank David Cuthell and Cemil Aydın for their wonderful support and encouragement. The Institute of Turkish Studies (ITS) at Georgetown University and the Ali Vural Ak Global Islamic Studies Center at George Mason University co-sponsorships made possible the YSOT program as well as the YSOT Conference 2011. We also thank Kılıç Buğra Kanat for editing this volume.

As we embark upon a new year of the YSOT program, we hope to build upon the success of the first year with a similar vision of enriching the policy discussions with in-depth academic knowledge through engaging early-career academics. We hope this endeavor will contribute to a deeper understanding of the realities of Turkey and better relations with its allies and neighbors.

Kadir Üstün

PART 1: HISTORY AND IDENTITY IN TURKEY

FIGURES OF NATIONALIST SPEECH IN ATATÜRK'S GREAT SPEECH

Matthew deTar

ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1927, Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk) opened the third session of Turkey's new Grand National Assembly with a speech that he delivered in six-hour increments every day for the rest of the week. Known simply as *Nutuk* or *Büyük Nutuk* (The Speech, or The Great Speech), the thirty-six and a half hour address presented a history of the Turkish nationalist movement, the War of Independence, and the legislative reforms of the new Turkish Republic from 1919 through 1927, centering around the activities of Atatürk. The speech is a collection of hundreds of telegrams and letters (excerpted and complete) written by various prominent figures of the late Ottoman Empire or the Turkish nationalist movement, stitched together with surprisingly sparse narration to offer a kind of insider's perspective on the military campaigns, negotiations, and legislative debates of the early Republic. The text is commonly remembered as the product of Atatürk's singular genius, but the contents and strategy of the speech were researched over the course of many months with the help of Atatürk's closest colleagues, and composition and revision of the text continued amongst this group during the entire week of the speech's presentation (Kinross 1995 [1964], 439; Volkan and Itzkowitz 1984, 278). At the time the speech was delivered, Atatürk had recently silenced all political opposition, and for over twenty years, the text circulated in Turkey as the only account of the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the activities of the Turkish nationalist movement. In fact, until about twenty years ago, scholars generally accepted *Nutuk* as an

important historical source (Zürcher 2004 [1990], 175). Although recent scholars have begun to develop critical analyses of *Nutuk*, making sense of the political and social significance of *Nutuk* remains a task with which many scholars still struggle.

Many theorists of nationalism have recognized the way that the discipline of history (and particular histories) can function to reinforce or define a national identity.¹ For instance, Aslı Gür has argued that Turkey's Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara develops a narrative linking Turkish ethnicity to ancient Hittite civilization in order to naturalize the land area of modern Turkey (especially central Anatolia) as the traditional homeland of the Turks (Gür 2007). Despite recognition of the ways in which certain academic disciplines, such as history, construct national identity, relatively few studies of *Nutuk* characterize it as a nationalist history. Among the scholars who develop approaches to *Nutuk* that account for the ability of histories to create national identity, Erik Zürcher is perhaps the most prominent, demonstrating the ways in which *Nutuk* strategically portrays historical events in order to marginalize and demonize Atatürk's political opponents, especially those who had been prominent supporters of the nationalist movement and Independence struggle (Zürcher 2010). Other scholars have followed this critical approach, and Hüllya Adak develops an analysis of the way *Nutuk* establishes Atatürk as the only legitimate representative of the Turkish nation in order to easily dismiss anyone in the narrative (specifically Halide Edib) with political ideas contrary to Atatürk's own (Adak 2003). Toni Alaranta extends this line of inquiry, arguing that *Nutuk* defines an official history of the Turkish Republic by developing a myth of national rebirth that relies on highly stylized conceptions of the national will

1. For instance, Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2nd edition (New York: Canto, 1993). It is not only through the discipline of history that national identity is developed, but through many other "regimes of knowledge" including archaeology, geography, economics, anthropology, etc. See Nadia Abu El-Haj, *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

and internal enemies (Alaranta 2008).² Although these approaches to *Nutuk* are important for identifying both the text's purposeful description of history and some of the narrative strategies that construct and maintain this history, the speech is also a *nationalist* history, and it offers a vignette of Turkish national identity which remains largely unexplored. This essay offers such an analysis of *Nutuk*, developing an account not only of the way the text strategically organizes history, but also of the way the text establishes a sense of national identity that relates to this history.

In order to better understand the linguistic and rhetorical construction of national identity in *Nutuk*, I argue that scholars should attend to the way the speech relies on certain "figures" which organize the most salient features of Turkish national identity. If, as Craig Calhoun has argued, nationalism operates as a "discursive formation," then, I would argue, specific nationalisms construct this discursive formation by relying on culturally-specific rhetorical "figures" that manage crises in identity, offer tangible modes of expressing that identity, and shift over time with the demands and constraints of the moment (Calhoun 1998). For instance, in *Nutuk* the figure of "religion" is constituted by a number of concepts and institutions, such as the Caliphate or references to pan-Islamism, and the negotiation of this set of concepts and institutions as a whole has important consequences for the way that national identity develops in the speech. This paper traces the figure of religion in *Nutuk*, emphasizing the way that a complex social and political phenomenon is represented in and circulates through language, and the way this figure constrains or structures action. The emphasis on the figure of a social and/or political phenomenon is not meant to imply a distinction between the real and imagined understandings of that phenomenon, but rather to emphasize different registers of experience of it, since statements surrounding the figure of religion have powerful effects on the way people imagine Turkish national identity. By attend-

2. See also Aysel Morin and Ronald Lee, 2010. "Constitutive Discourse of Turkish Nationalism: Atatürk's *Nutuk* and the Rhetorical Construction of the "Turkish People,"" *Communication Studies* 61(5).

ing to the figures that constitute national identity in Atatürk's *Nutuk*, one can move beyond a surface-level encounter with national identity in the text, such as the characterizations of the "national will" or the peroration to the Turkish youth, and instead develop a complex sense of the rhetorical structure of nationalism and some of the figures which continue to organize Turkish national identity today.

"Figures" of Nationalism and Discursive Formations

This approach to *Nutuk* and nationalism attempts to build on Calhoun's theory of nationalism as a discursive form, but also to incorporate some of the methodological concerns specified by Talal Asad.³ In Asad's *Formations of the Secular*, he develops a "comparison of embedded concepts (representations) between societies differently located in time and space," in order to locate "the forms of life that articulate [these concepts], the powers they release or disable" (Asad 2003, 17). In relation to a specific nationalism, this kind of project would specify a number of such embedded concepts, or a constellation of associated terms, in order to examine the "powers they release or disable" in the service of articulating a particular discursive form, which, in this instance, is a particular nationalism. This kind of work, for Asad, not only allows for an identification and description of concepts, but also focuses a critic on the reasons why a specific cultural concept "has become hegemonic *as a political goal*, what practical consequences follow from that hegemony, and what social conditions maintain it" (Assad 2003, 13, original emphasis). Focusing on specific concepts that circulate within a discursive form of nationalism, then, allows for a consideration of the structure and significance of each concept in the form. Although this essay finds its primary motivation in Calhoun's suggestion that nationalism is a discursive form, many of the primary theoretical concerns can be explored with reference to Asad's anthropology of concepts.

3. As will become clear, a theory of nationalism that treats it as a "discursive form" differs markedly from an idea of nationalism as a discreet set of characteristics of an individual. That is, this analysis is not concerned with describing the ideal Turk using attributes like "hospitable," etc., but instead focuses on a particular constellation of concepts like "religion," "the military," or "Atatürk," that circulate in public discourse in a specific matrix of power relations to circumscribe the meaning of Turkish national identity.

Locating this project within the theoretical concerns articulated by Calhoun and Asad entails particular understandings of the terms discourse, statements, and language, and both Calhoun and Asad develop these terms out of the work of Michel Foucault. For Foucault, a discourse encompasses more than linguistic phenomena, and specifying a discourse involves more than an outline of the relevant terms used in a particular field of study. Rather:

Discourse is characterized not by privileged objects, but by the way in which it forms objects that are in fact highly dispersed. This formation is made possible by a group of relations established between authorities of emergence, delimitation, and specification. One might say, then, that a discursive formation is defined (as far as its objects are concerned, at least) if one can establish such a group; if one can show how any particular object of discourse finds in [discourse] its place and law of emergence; if one can show that it may give birth simultaneously or successively to mutually exclusive objects, without having to modify itself. (Foucault 1976, 44)

A discursive form like nationalism, then, organizes a “highly dispersed” set of objects or concepts, comprising the various relations of authority between those objects, and establishing their “laws of emergence” and dispersal. Within or related to each of these objects, Foucault offers the idea of “statements” as the expressions of the “concrete contents” of “structures and possible unities” of discourse (Foucault 1976, 87). Statements are more than the words of a speaking subject and resemble instead a kind of discursive event, a function within discourse. Statements combine linguistic and non-linguistic phenomena and constitute the trace of a discursive object, a concrete example, the accumulation of which constitutes an object in discourse (Foucault 1976, 99). Language, then, operates at a different level of existence from the statement (Foucault 1976, 85), groups of statements serve as the evidence of discursive objects, and the discursive form as a whole organizes these objects and the relations of authority between them.

This understanding of the relations between discourse, statement, and language helps specify how to approach an analysis of the figure of “religion” in Turkish nationalism and *Nutuk*. For example, the project begins with the identification of a “statement” that can

work as a concrete expression or trace of the object as a whole. In this case, *Nutuk* itself operates as such a statement. Since this piece of evidence is textual, and since a statement (for Foucault) extends beyond the words of a speaking subject, the textual evidence of a statement is then read not for the way it defines or even uses the word “religion,” but to evidence the function of a particular concept of religion in society and the modes of dispersal and authority which constitute this concept. To take a somewhat more recent example, when Turkish president Adnan Menderes announced a change in the liturgical language of the country in 1950, this was significant not because it showed a secret sympathy for religious belief on the part of that president, but because a whole system of historical relations that designated the place of religion in society became apparent, both in the way some of these relations are negotiated through Menderes’s political speech and in the reference to these historical conditions offered in media accounts of the event. This method of analysis therefore charts systems of authority and dispersal of objects within a specific discursive form of nationalism, and an analysis of the figure of religion in *Nutuk* will help specify this network of authority as evidenced in the text.

Brief Historical Context of *Nutuk*

When Atatürk arrived in Ankara to deliver his six-day speech in October 1927, it essentially marked the end of a ten-year period of violence and political power struggle that had consumed Turkey after the First World War (Kinross 1995 [1964], 440). Since the Ottoman Army had aligned itself with Germany late in the war, the Ottoman Sultan was forced to accept harsh terms after World War I in the Treaty of Sèvres, which essentially parceled the remaining Ottoman territory into spheres of American, British, and French influence. A number of prominent Ottoman intellectuals, politicians, and military officers began creating local nationalist organizations in order to oppose the Sultan’s acquiescence to the Sèvres Treaty terms, and to prepare for armed resistance to the Entente Armies, if necessary. As this resistance became more organized, the Entente Powers realized

that enforcement of the treaty terms could only be achieved through armed suppression of the nationalist organizations. Since none of the Entente Powers were interested in sending more troops to the Middle East to resume hostilities, the Greek Army was appointed to enforce the treaty, with the understanding that Greece would keep any territory gained in battle. After the Greek Army sailed across the Aegean and occupied portions of modern Turkey, the Turkish nationalist organizations mounted an armed resistance from 1919-23, now known as the Turkish War of Independence. This war forced the Entente Powers to abandon the Treaty of Sèvres and renegotiate on terms much more favorable to the Turkish nationalists, establishing the borders of contemporary Turkey and recognizing the governing authority of the Turkish nationalists' Grand National Assembly (Zürcher 2004 [1990], 133-163).

The battles of the War of Independence were fought alongside an intense domestic power struggle between the Ottoman Sultan's Government in Istanbul (which was largely no longer in control of a regular Army), and the Turkish nationalists headquartered in Ankara (a town of twenty thousand at the time) who orchestrated most of the military activities. During the War of Independence, Atatürk had gradually concentrated his own power over the military and the Grand National Assembly by promoting loyal military officers and politicians, and by consistently refusing to negotiate with the Sultan. By 1923, Atatürk was roundly in control of the military and had been elected president of the Grand National Assembly by his fellow assembly members. As a decisive reformation of the political power structure between the Ottomans and the Grand National Assembly, in 1923 Atatürk led the Assembly to declare Ankara the new capital of Turkey and to proclaim Turkey a Republic, thereby rendering the Sultan politically powerless. Since the Ottoman Sultan no longer controlled a military force capable of resisting these reforms, he was forced to flee the country aboard a British ship, and a new, strictly religious Caliph was appointed in his place, leaving the Grand National Assembly as the uncontested political authority of the new Turkish Republic (Zürcher 2004 [1990]).

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