

## Moving Populations : The Foundations of Diaspora in the Early Republic of Turkey

Routledge Handbook of Turkey's Diasporas

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<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003269021-3>

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# MOVING POPULATIONS

## The Foundations of Diaspora in the Early Republic of Turkey

*Christopher Houston and Joost Jongerden*

### Introduction

If the 19th century in Europe has been dubbed the age of revolution (Hobsbawm 1962), its 20th century can be described as the age of forced population movements. The close temporal succession and the relationship between the two processes are not arbitrary. In applying their doctrines, modern revolutions of different kinds instigated ongoing routing and uprooting of people, through resettlement programmes, military operations, forced sedentarisation, mass expulsions, political deportations, and practices of ethnic and religious purification. Willing participation in, or resistance to, these revolutionary projects contributed to people's relocating, as support or opposition to them further displaced populations and de-populated places.

Far from being immune to such processes, for more than a century, Turkey has been centrally engaged with revolutionary politics and projects. This means that it has also been a place of massive population dislocations, many of which can be linked to *contemporary* internal and external diasporas, ongoing social grievances (Baser 2017), conflicting senses of belonging (Pavlidis 2008; Kyramargiou 2022), and a variety of identity claims (Dinç 2021). The continuing history of both forced and voluntary emigration from Turkey has meant the moving of many of its inhabitants to countries around the globe and a relocation of political struggles.

In the long 20th century, Turkey's first and most influential revolutionaries were the cadres of the Union and Progress Party (*İttihat ve Terakki Partisi* or *Cemiyeti*, the so-called Young Turks), whose Turkish supremacism emerged as a murderous political force against non-Muslim populations during the First World War. The 1913 military coup by the Young Turks signalled not only the practical end of the Ottoman Empire and its ruling dynasty but an intensification of deportation policies in both the western (Aegean) and eastern (Kurdistan) extremities of Ottoman territory. These were the provinces that the Young Turks' own research had shown to be ethnically and religiously highly heterogeneous, including large Greek (Rum), Assyrian Syriac, Armenian, and Kurdish populations (Zürcher 1984; Dündar 2014).

Spread across Europe, North Africa, and Asia, the Ottoman Empire had been an assemblage of systems of direct and indirect rule. Moreover, the rulers did not consider themselves the bearers of a national identity or representatives of a nation, and neither did they express the need to mould, shape, and create a population. By contrast, claiming Anatolia as its territory, the new regime replaced a de-centralised and a-national state with a centralised and nationalist one. Best compared with the Hellenistic and Bulgarian chauvinisms dominating politics in Greece and the Balkans at the same time, by the early 1920s the ‘Young Turk’ movement had become Kemalist, terminating the Ottoman Empire and instituting the Republic of Turkey. From 1910 to 1950, and then less hegemonically into the present, the nationalistic Young Turk-Kemalists, like the Bolsheviks ‘next door’ in the Soviet Union, pursued politics as a total project that sought to revolutionise cultural and administrative practices.

Their success in becoming and transforming the state means that we should conceive the early Turkish Republic as constituting a specific type of government, a *social movement-state compound* animated by a selectively modernist and radically nationalist programme. In historical accounts, the founders of the Republic have rarely been considered militants of a social movement. One reason for this is their political success. In the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, they transitioned from a network of secret organisations, cultural associations, student groups, military officers, intellectuals, and ethnic business lobbies to governmental and political power, first in the Young Turk regime and then in their institution of the Republic. This has acted to disqualify them as a social movement in the categories of social movement theory itself. Yet clearly Kemalist cadres, both as social activists and as members of the bureaucracy, the military, the party, the professions, or the government, launched what Alain Touraine asserts is key to social movement practice: a bid for ‘historicity’ or a project that sought to alter “the set of cultural, cognitive, economic, and ethical models ... through which social practices are constituted” (1988: 40–41).

In this introductory chapter to *Routledge Handbook of Turkey’s Diasporas*, we investigate three core issues: (1) How should the foundational politics of this hybrid *social movement-state* best be analysed? (2) What core processes of population displacement did the revolutionary politics of this government initiate? and (3) How do these processes live on in the activities and discourses of diasporas from Turkey today?

To answer these questions, we divide this chapter into two parts. First, we discuss the ‘nuclear’ ideas and social practices that shaped Kemalism as a consistent political force in these critical early decades (see section ‘A Theory of Kemalist Practice’). Inspired by Turkish nationalism against the rival political styles of Ottomanism and Pan-Islamism (see Akçura 2005), Kemalism propagated a cluster of ideals and affects connected to a vision of a good society. This included the political conviction that the Anatolian Muslim population had to be turned into Turks and that Turks should be the masters of a new modern state.

This building of a Turkish nation under the guidance of the Kemalist state involved a variety of practices of authoritarian modernism, defined here in particular by its very narrow understanding of citizenship. Former Ottoman subjects of non-Muslim origin, such as Greeks, Armenians, and Jews, were excluded from the new political community, while Ottoman-Muslims, composed of various ethnic communities and religious sects, were intended to become a “single organic cultural unit” and “the principal social basis of the new political organization” (İçduygu and Kaygusuz 2004: 36; also see Chapters 8 and 9). To participate in political life, Ottoman-Muslims were required to self-define as Turks, leading in practice to the exclusion of Muslim

communities of non-Turkish origin – such as the Kurds – from proper membership of the new political community and thus from citizenship rights. Only those subjects who qualified as Turks had “the right to have rights” (De Gooyer et al. 2018).

This right possessed a double meaning. It references those who were constituted as ‘the people’ and thus who had a right to rights. But it also indicates the existence of another category of persons, of those who were outside the bounds of ‘the citizen,’ disqualified from rights: the “constitutive exclusion” (Butler 2015). As an illustration of this, south-eastern Turkey, inhabited mostly by Kurds, has been governed under martial law and emergency regulations almost continuously from 1927 to 2002 and then again since 2015 (Parslow 2016). Nearly all of those subject to forced displacement have belonged to this category of the national ‘outside.’

Modernism was significant in other social fields as well, for example, in the application of urban planning that re-fashioned city and countryside alike. Here spatial policies aimed to produce a settled nation from an empire of peoples on the move. Understanding this (un)settling past and its ongoing legacy in the present casts light upon the social and political *existence* of many of the diasporas examined by the chapters in this handbook.

In the chapter’s major second half (see section ‘Making Internal and External Diasporas in Turkey’), we identify and examine three founding events and political practices of these early decades, each of which in different ways continues to part-condition the social and political *activities* of Turkey’s contemporary diasporas today. These include, first, both the organised deportation and mass killings of Armenians from Anatolia by the Union and Progress Party Government during the First World War and the population ‘exchange’ – better, the compulsory mass expulsion – of Christians from Turkey and Muslims from Greece in 1922, organised by Turkey’s and Greece’s similarly nationalist governments (see section ‘Expelling Christians and Muslims’). In both events non-Turks and non-Muslims who made up large portions of the multireligious and multicultural Ottoman population were expelled, massacred, or made into minorities, with their attendant sufferings – suppression of their languages, assimilation within the Turkish population, and neglect of their political and cultural associations.

The second event (see section ‘Turning Kurds into Turks’) concerns the propagation from above of a Turkish nationalism directed at the subordination and assimilation of Kurdish Muslims in Eastern Anatolia, including of Kurdish Alevi, through relentless policies of Turkification (Jongerden 2007; Houston 2009; Üngör 2011). Ongoing regional resistance to that project – what can be called a long-term practice of *insurgent citizenship* – has spilled over to the political actions and commitments of Kurds in the huge Kurdish diaspora in Europe and other countries (see Chapter 10). In the context of the development of restrictive political space in Turkey in which Kurdish identity itself became a target to be destroyed (Bozarslan 2003), new political actors such as the Kurdistan Workers Party (*Partiya Karkêren Kurdistan*) have emerged to claim rights as Kurds, both within the newly emerging state system and outside it.

Kemalism’s third vital initiative encompasses the Republic’s misnamed policy of secularism (see section ‘Making Muslims “Secular”’). We write misnamed because, unlike more normative examples of secular arrangements around the world that establish a formal separation between religious institutions and the government, Turkish laicism involves the co-opting and regulating of Islam *by* the state (Parla and Davison 2004). Here the establishment of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*, hereafter Diyanet

for short) in 1924 has been central. But laicism also entailed the development of and care for an orthodox ‘Turkish-Sunni’ synthesis that undermined and delegitimised inner-Islamic plurality in Turkey, discriminating against the religious practices of minority groups, including Turkish and Kurdish Alevi. The Diyanet is influential today in organising and educating Turkey’s diasporic Sunni Muslims and the broader Muslim community in Europe, and in mobilising Turkish citizens to oppose the historical claims of other diasporas from Turkey (see Chapter 14).

### A Theory of Kemalist Practice

With the abolition of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War, the centre of power responsible for mastery (ideological and political) over Anatolia and Kurdistan became the new ethnic state of Turkey. A huge literature has zeroed in on the Republic’s formative years to describe and diagnose its political programme. Turkey has long been portrayed as an exemplary model of secular politics for the modernising third world, said to be a country where a secular elite has led the country into the modern age (Lerner 1958; Lewis 1994; Shah 2011). This representational practice has served that elite well. Military tutelage and an occasional coup were either considered compatible with an ‘authoritarian modernisation’ paradigm (Örnek 2012: 953) or evaluated as short-term interruptions to save democracy from itself and to keep development on track (Heper 2005). The result has been to make authoritarianism the fellow traveller of modernisation, cementing Turkey into the Western bloc during the Cold War, but also justifying persistent anti-democratic rule. In short, anodyne orthodox political science description of Turkey’s political trajectory as ‘secularisation,’ ‘modernisation,’ or ‘Westernisation’ (Berkes 1964) does scant justice to the radical social engineering of the regime and its systematically violent actions in its new territory.

More recent scholarly re-assessments have coined different terms to characterise Kemalist activities and ideologies. Bobby Sayyid (1997) argues that the work of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in Turkey and the discourse of Kemalism should be understood as generative of a new political paradigm for the wider Muslim world. Atabaki and Zürcher (2004) describe the social project of the Turkish nationalists as ‘authoritarian modernisation,’ while Keyder (1987) draws attention to similarities between Turkish Kemalism and the corporatism of Italian fascism. For example, in 1936 the government announced ‘full congruency’ between state administration and the then-ruling Republican People’s Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* or CHP). As in Italian fascism, “with this declaration all state officials in the administrative field became local party officials” (Keyder 1987: 100). Similarly, in 1935 the Kemalists replicated Mussolini’s Labour Law that in corporatist style banned all ‘class-based’ activities, including the forming of trade unions and the holding of strikes. These laws had a long germination. As Mustafa Kemal affirmed in 1923, “it is not possible to separate into classes practitioners of various occupations because their interests are compatible with one another, and all of them compromise the people ... It is thus I see our nation” (Parla and Davison 2004: 83). It was only in 1961 with the founding of the Workers’ Party of Turkey (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi* or TİP) that a pro-labour parliamentary presence and legal representation was established in Turkey.

Too often overlooked in accounts examining Turkey’s economic underdevelopment, this heavy-handed Kemalist corporatism is significant in thinking about the willingness of Turkish workers to migrate internationally to pursue work between the 1950s and the 1970s. Although it would be simplistic to attribute the mass movement of workers from Turkey to

Europe (and later to Australia) to the lack of workers' rights in Turkey, it is equally reductive to deny that it played no part in their unwillingness to return, especially given the legal protections extended to unions and to pro-labour politics in western Europe. Indeed, in violently suppressing trade union activity, in claiming to represent the interests of the collective Turkish nation, and in asserting that antagonistic classes did not exist amongst the Turkish people, the junta regime after the 1980 military coup explicitly re-enacted that 1930s' authoritarian corporatism, leading to another wave of workers' and labour activists' political emigration from Turkey.

Are there other alternative analytic/descriptive terms we can use to better capture the nuclear ideas and primary political practices of Kemalism? There are several possibilities. In her work on architecture and nation-building in Kemalist Turkey, Sibel Bozdoğan (1994) analyses what she calls its project of *de-Ottomanisation*, describing its eradication of Ottoman spaces in the transforming of the visual appearance of the urban landscape as a key method of social change. De-Ottomanisation involved social-spatial alteration *and* forced human movement at both a micro and major scale, including a decades-long targeting for ethnic cleansing of the mixed Ottoman populations who lived in Istanbul.

But the phrase de-Ottomanisation suggests an overly *negational* politics. What was Kemalism's *affirmative* political content? To identify and illustrate its practical operations of power, below we use the example of its construction of the new capital of Ankara, a city intended to create a new history and society. Identification of the empirical practices of statecraft that organised Ankara's establishment and expansion is more precise than ahistorical generalisations, i.e., modernisation, in revealing the primary forces in the Kemalists' transfer of rule.

Both Ankara and the new nation were crafted through at least nine political practices,<sup>1</sup> each of whose undemocratic and assimilative dimensions majorly contributed to waves of migration internally and externally in Turkey. *Dictatorisation* and *sanctification* constituted the first two processes. Dictatorisation entailed the "specific centralization of power about the person of the ruler" (Vryonis 1991: 1). In the main, orthodox accounts of the new republic obfuscate Mustafa Kemal's dictatorship. The reason, as Parla and Davison note, is the influence of the 'tutelary democratic thesis,' which asserts that the "cult of the hero status that sprung up around Kemal ... has less to do with Kemal's personal ambitions or with Kemalism's essential anti-democratic content than with the needs of the people in a heavily traditional context" (2004: 4). Blame the people. The state-city's *sanctification* was closely related, sacralised in the increasing density of nationalist monuments, mausoleums of its notables, martyrs' memorials, and statuary that covered the new capital. Take the Turkish State Cemetery administered by the Ministry of Defence, which contains the graves of military commanders and companions-in-arms of Mustafa Kemal, as well as of the presidents of Turkey, including that of Kenan Evren, head of the ruling junta after the 1980 military coup.

*Mandarinisation* or the creation of a vast bureaucracy "with its intricate networks of bureaus, clientele, and memory system (archives)" (Vryonis 1991: 19) was the third process whereby political power is concentrated in the city. Mandarinisation brings with it *literatization*, "as [it] could function only through the written word" (Vryonis 1991: 19). Alongside its new institutions of law, learning, and national libraries, the regime enacted both alphabet reform and a Turkish language purification programme as integral aspects of its transfer of rule. In creating linguistic minorities and in pursuing the death of their languages, both practices were foundational in creating conditions for non-Turkish emigration from the Republic.

Fifthly, the presence of the ruler[s] in the city necessitates its *militarisation*, so much so that in the new capital the buildings of the military 'mandarins' dominated the parliamentary

complex. *Demographisation* follows, with the building up of the city's population, not merely through the recruitment of workers, artisans, soldiers, and bureaucrats but through the instituting of academies and artistic companies (Presidential Orchestras, State Folk Dance ensembles, etc.), all with their cadres' specialised skills. This inclusion came with an exclusion: demographisation also included a ban on entering the central districts of the new capital for those, mostly villagers, whose appearance and behaviour were considered inappropriate. These processes entailed the city's *thesaurisation*, "the accumulation and centralization of the [nation's] economic wealth" (Vryonis 1991: 21). Taxes flowed into the capital for its building, while loans and investments flowed out. Any federal structure that would share political power and decentralise revenue-raising was rejected.

Finally, the transfer of rule was concretised and procured through the city's *monumentalisation* and *ceremonialisation*. Modern architecture distinguished the city and new rituals consecrated it, periodically revivifying its sacred national dead. The most carefully orchestrated state ritual occurred at the mausoleum of Atatürk, *Anıtkabir*. Beyond the inscription of "message-bearing units of composition" (Preziosi 1991: 106) in the design details of *Anıtkabir*, it is the regular commemorative ceremonies at the site of his tomb that infuses the memorial with its social power. Note that in typical high modernist fashion *democratisation*, or the right of inhabitants to have a say in the arranging and use of the built environments in which they dwell, was absent.

In short, the political logic and processes that constructed Ankara also emanated from that city across the country, lucidly revealing the prime forces that drove mass population displacements in Turkey in the first decades of the early Republic: authoritarian centralism, militarism, Turkish literatisation, and the supremacy of the state over against the population. To these we must add *ethnic nationalism*, the most central practice and principle of the Young Turk/Kemalist social and political movement. Nationalism constituted a theory of political sovereignty, attacking symbols of dynastic authority. But it also developed new rituals and justifications for ethnic Turkish rule, defending its legitimacy through a discourse organised around key terms of ethnicity, race, and nation.

Kemalism's affirmative political content produced sanctified bureaucratic institutions imbued with a systematic desire to suppress socio-cultural differences in the name of the nation, creating new political fault lines around cultural identity. Minorities had to self-define as Turks and become competent in the political vocabulary of the Kemalist elite to count as citizens (Barkey and Fuller 1998; Yeğen 2009). If they qualified themselves as Turks, they became subjects of the state and could enjoy citizenship rights – albeit within a narrow political space in which political activities were scrutinised on their potential threat to the so-called inseparable unity existing between the Turkish people and the Turkish state. If they did not, they became 'abject,' a population who did not have the right to rights. What becomes clear from the contributions in this handbook is that minority diasporic subjects from Turkey are not usefully apprehended as *citizens* struggling for rights. On the contrary, the defining characteristic of their struggle is to become (part of) a political community in which they would have the right to make claims to rights (Isin 2009).

In sum, the complexity of Kemalism in all its varied facets indicates the radical *inadequacy* of the terms modernisation, Westernisation, or secularisation to describe its practice and theory. Fascist modernism or ethnic capitalism might be equally good (or bad) descriptors. Clearly the inability of modernisation theory to comprehend the revolutionary and authoritarian dimensions of Kemalism suggests the need for a more varied genealogy in accounting for them. Kemalism's selective modification of the imagery and practices of the French

Revolution, futuristic modernism, positivist science and functional religion, ideological corporatism, and racialised-romantic nationalism are much better starting points.

## **Making Internal and External Diasporas in Turkey**

### *Expelling Christians and Muslims*

Over the course of the 19th century, Anatolian Muslims became more Turkish, and Christians more Greek or Armenian. In that process cross-culturally spoken vernacular languages, shared alphabets, and common places and place names began to tear apart. Linguistic nationalists proposed new artificial and purified Turkish, Armenian, and Greek ‘high’ dialects; cross-cultural foods were ethnicised; regional music, dances, and songs were made national (Hough 2010). But shared worlds still remained: parsley – *maydanoz/maintanos/μαϊντανός* – tasted as pungent in any language.

In the case of Christians, the two biggest single causes for massive population decreases were the Young Turks’ forced migration and massacre of Armenians during the First World War, and the compulsory population exchange between Greece and Turkey in 1922–1923, as noted above. Together with the war in Anatolia between the Greek army of occupation and the Turkish nationalists, these led to the flight or expulsion of some 1.4 million Anatolian Christians: “In 1913, one out of five persons in the geographical area that is now Turkey was a Christian; by the end of 1923, the proportion had declined to one in forty” (Keyder 2003: 43). All events unfolded on the presumed incompatibility of different religious communities in being able to live together in the territories of newly imagined, emergent nations. Even today the Republic’s denial of the Young Turks’ deportation and extermination policies have been of intense distress for the large Armenian diaspora scattered around the globe. Controversy rages as to whether the mass killing of Armenians by the Young Turks constitutes genocide (Bloxham 2005; Gutman 2015). But most scholars acknowledge its intent to produce a Sunni-Turkish homogenisation of Anatolia and Kurdistan and a radical diminishment of the Armenian presence there.

The Young Turks targeted other ethnic groups in the eastern provinces as well, including Assyrian and Chaldean Christians. Additionally, according to Üngör (2011), in 1916 tens of thousands of Kurds were forcibly removed from eastern Anatolia, and Bulgarian, Albanian, and Bosnian Muslims resettled in their place.

These traumatising forced population movements and exchanges occurred all over the contracting Ottoman Empire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Christian equivalents of the Young Turks in Russia and the Balkans committed similar acts of ethnic cleansing and massacre. In the period 1859–1879, about 1.5 million Muslim emigrants from the Caucasus were resettled by the authorities in the Black Sea coastal area (Sinop, Trabzon, Samsun, Adapazarı, Bolu, and Bilecik). In 1877–1878, about 1.5 million Muslim emigrants from the Balkans came to Anatolia and were resettled in western (Trakya, Bursa, Balıkesir, and Bandırma) and eastern Anatolia (Diyarbakır). In 1912–1913, some 640,000 Muslim emigrants from the Balkans were relocated to central and western Anatolia (Tekeli 1990), mainly in districts around Amasya, Tokat, Sivas, Çankırı, Adana, Aydın, İçel (or Mersin), Bursa, Adapazarı, and İzmit (Doğanay 1996). Indeed, 17 separate, large population movements took place between 1912 and 1924 alone, which involved the total transfer of between 2,300,000 and 2,500,000 Greeks, Bulgarians, and Turks, in both directions, to and from the two new Balkan states (Pallis 1925b: 317–320). The largest one, the Greco-Turkish

Convention for the exchange of populations, was overseen by the League of Nations, which concluded that the drawing of new borders was best served by ethnic separation (Jongerden 2007: 181–187).

There were economic dimensions to the killing and expulsions of Christians and Muslims, too. In Turkey, officials distributed approximately 11 million *dönüms*<sup>2</sup> of farmland (including croplands, gardens, and vineyards) to Muslim emigrants and refugees from Greece, the Balkans, and the Caucasus between 1923 and 1944 (Korkut 1987). Distributed lands consisted of unoccupied areas once farmed by Armenians (before 1915) and by Greeks (before 1923). Ten regions of resettlement for migrants were identified, and the exchanged population from Greece was categorised as farmers of grains, tobacco, olives, and vegetables (Arı 1995).

It is commonly asserted that the population exchange gave Anatolia a new Turkish imprint (Pallis 1925a, 1925b; Lados 1932; Keyder 1979–1980; Karpat 1985; Arı 1995). Yet the criterion used to determine whether a person was ‘exchangeable’ or not was religion rather than ethnicity. Indeed, if one takes the perspective of language, Anatolia had probably become less ‘Turkish’ by 1923 than it had been in 1913. The intent of the Republic towards this large multilingual *non-Turkish* Muslim population in Anatolia entailed their compulsory assimilation.

### *Turning Kurds into Turks*

The Kemalist bureaucracy referred to this turning of Anatolia into a Turkish ‘ethnoscape’ in different ways: as internal colonisation (Barkan 1948); as missionary work to convert or civilise the population (Köymen 1939); and as a racial ordering (Köymen 1934). Forced and collective resettlement practices, therefore, were not only tools for population exchange but also designed as instruments for targeted colonialism.

The 1934 Settlement Law (also known as Law No. 2510) was a piece of legislation sanctioning forced and collective resettlement that provides an interesting lens on the politics of population movement and settlement in the early decades of the Republic. The law categorised Turkey’s inhabitants into three groups: those who spoke Turkish whom the state considered to be of Turkish ethnicity; those who did not speak Turkish but were considered by the authorities to be of Turkish ethnicity; and those who did not speak Turkish and who were not considered to be of Turkish ethnicity.

It also divided Turkey into three zones: Zone 1 included those areas deemed desirable to increase the density of the culturally Turkish population. A detailed specification of a Zone 1 settlement area was made in decree number 2/12374, being composed mainly of land on either side of roads and railways in the Southeast, and a 25-kilometre-wide strip along the borders with Syria, Iraq, Iran, and the Soviet Union. Alongside these roads, railways, and borders, Turkish speakers and villagers of Turkish ancestry had to be “tied to land” (Article 2 of Decree 2/12374). Zone 2 areas were those in which the state deemed it desirable to establish populations that they wished to assimilate into the Turkish culture. Under the provisions of the law Kurds could be deported to Zone 2, predominantly areas in the western parts of Turkey. Zone 3 areas included those lands that should be evacuated for economic, political, military, or public health reasons, and where resettlement was prohibited. These were mainly small rural areas in mountainous areas whose residents were perceived as difficult to govern and assimilate and who were regarded (therefore) as posing a significant security problem (Jongerden 2007: 174–175).

Some of the previous laws on which the Settlement Act No. 2510 was modelled had been explicitly designed to deport Kurds from specified areas. After 1927, Law 1097, the ‘Law on the Deportation of Some Individuals from Eastern Zones to Provinces in the West’ (*Bazı Eşhasın Şark Mıntakasından Garp Vilayetlerine Nakline Dair Kanun*) was used to deport 14,000 families from Beyazıt to provinces in the West (Kökdemir 1952: 28–29). Further, under the provisions of Law 1178, about 500 people from Diyarbakır who had knowledge of or who were actively involved in the Şeyh Said uprising (in Turkish *bilfiil*) were deported to İzmir, Aydın, Manisa, Antalya, and Bursa (Kökdemir 1952: 30–31; Beysanoğlu 2001: 1026).

Though the 1934 Settlement Act is rightly perceived as a legislative means to assimilate the Kurdish population through displacement and resettlement, the law was equally concerned with the assimilation of the Muslim migrants who had moved into Anatolia because of population movements, including the exchanges. It replaced and synthesised a legislation patchwork that had been adopted in the 1910s and 1920s, regulating the settlement of Muslim emigrants from former territories and Kurdish deportees (Kökdemir 1952: 28–29). These laws and decrees included two settlement acts, one passed on May 31, 1926 (*İskan Kanunu* no. 885) and the other one two months later, on August 1, 1926 (*İskana Ait Muhbir*). Both were primarily concerned with defining the conditions for the settlement of emigrants from Greece, the Balkans, and the Soviet Union (Kökdemir 1952: 25–27, 192–193). In the new spaces of settlement, the nationalist mission of architecture involved the converting and conditioning of inhabitants to become Turks (Ziya 1933).

In short, Turkish nationalism denied minorities, including Kurds, the right to self-description of their distinctiveness from Turks. It also suppressed Kurdish Islam. In his study of the changing keywords of what he calls Turkish state discourse on the Kurds, Mesut Yeğen notes that, throughout the first 70 years of Kemalism, the one unvarying aspect of state discourse has been a categorical denial that Kurds constitute a separate ethnic element in Turkey. Strict control over the representation of Kurds by the state resulted in the enunciation of ‘Kurdish’ identity in limited and coded ways, in a discourse on “reactionary politics, tribal resistance or regional backwardness” (1996: 216). For Yeğen, official state discourse on the Kurds since the founding of the Republic has been characterised by an ethnocidal logic, in its determination to Turkify those “who think themselves Kurdish.” The words are from a 1961 report on the ‘Eastern problem’ commissioned by the Turkish military after the coup in 1960, which refused to use the word ‘Kurds.’ Perhaps inevitably, Kurds’ responses to this continuing ontological negation have included a re-valuing of Kurdish cultural heritage, including the development of Kurdish literature, cinema, and music, both in Turkey and in their transnational spaces of migration and exile (see Chapters 29 and 28).

### *Making Muslims ‘Secular’*

As several chapters in this handbook demonstrate, Turkey’s many diasporic groups generate their transnational engagements in relation to one other primary feature of Republican politics: its century-long practice of ‘secularism.’ We write ‘secularism’ in scare quotes here because, as a huge revisionist literature on the Turkish state notes (e.g., Walton 2013; Gürpınar and Kenar 2016; Houston 2021), Kemalism’s political practice is not secularist in any normative sense of the term. Taha Parla and Andrew Davison put it this way: Kemalist secularism “posits neither a thorough separation between religious institutions and the state nor the privatization of religion characteristic of liberalism” (2003: 14).

In a separate study, Davison reminds readers that, given their different etymologies, histories, and normative presuppositions, secularism is not a synonym for the word laicism (*laiklik*), the Turkish term used to describe its political order. But equally significantly, he argues that even when politico-religious institutional arrangements in Turkey are more properly re-labelled as laicism, those arrangements must be understood as a “limited, inconsistent, and ambivalent form of laicism” (2003: 333). More bluntly, and despite surface similarities, we think Turkish and French laicity are incomparable and that the differences show that Turkey is not a normative laicist political order either. In the early Turkish Republic, ‘laicity’ or ‘secularity’ was not a mechanism unfolding simultaneously along with modernisation, as supposedly happened in the West. It was instead a political project, in which the state became the controller and definer of religion.

Accordingly, confusion over the concept of secularism and conflict over state-religion-society relations in the Republic of Turkey, both historically and in the present, and domestically and transnationally, are endemic. In a review of some of the more recent literature, Murat Somer (2013) shows how it is polarised between conflicting interpretations. On the one hand, there is the maximal claim that the Kemalist Republic was *hostile* to Islam and to religion. Its abolition of the Caliphate, dismantling of shariah law courts, takeover of pious foundations (*vakıf*), and closure of Islamic medreses, and the lodges of Sufi orders are all presented as evidence of the animus of Kemalist elites towards Islam. Both hostility and indifference are seen as connected to the endeavour to remove religion from the public sphere (Tuncay 2001). This is the basis for Ahmet Kuru’s (2007) description of Kemalism as ‘assertive secularism’ as opposed to ‘passive secularism’ as seen in the USA.

On the other hand, there is the equally compelling contention that the Republic endorsed, enabled, and reformed Sunni Islam, creating a ‘symbiotic relationship’ between state and religion “where the state is the controlling and dominant party” (Somer 2013: 588). Somer himself prefers what he calls an ‘integrationist’ model of state-religion relations in Turkey that acknowledges state promotion of religion. In other words, Kemalist politics both *enlightens* believers by purifying Islam (presumably according to scientific reason), while *functionalising* religion for moral ethnic solidarity. De-politicising certain aspects of Ottoman Islam, the Kemalists re-politicised it for the Republic, seeking to embed a public and nationalistic religion in the private conscience of citizens.

Central to its enlivening was the Diyanet. As noted above, instituted in 1924, the Diyanet is the prime Kemalist institution tasked with defining the meaning and scope of religion. Its brief was not, however, to force religion’s passing away as was occurring next door in the Soviet Union. Instead, its mission was to instrumentalise and control it. Through the Diyanet, the Republic brought religious institutions and the training and appointment of religious personnel under the aegis of the state. Governmentally, all religious functionaries in Turkey became salaried state bureaucrats of the Diyanet, appointable after completion of their state-approved qualifications. Specialists in Islamic *şeriat* (sharia) law, too, were employed by the Diyanet, and non-authorised ulema (Muslim scholars) were suppressed.

Early clues revealing the concerns of this redeployed, regime-supporting Islam can be seen in its first two projects, each initiated in 1925: the publication, *Askere Din Dersleri* (Religious Lessons for the Soldier), prepared by the Diyanet for conscripts on the request of the General Staff of the Turkish Army; and the handbook, *Yeni Hutbeleirim* (My New Sermons), written for imams. The first chapter of the text for soldiers included a section titled ‘Love of Fatherland Comes from Belief.’ In it, its author claimed that “Islam also has a sixth pillar, which is *cihad*, military service ... This duty is different from prayer, fasting, hajj, and zakat.

Unless this duty is fulfilled, the others cannot be properly performed” (Gürpınar and Kenar 2016: 66–67). Here one hears the new state’s attempt to sacralise nation-making practices through references to Islam, including its extension of the religious term ‘martyr’ (*şehit*) to those soldiers who die for the nation. The second publication was aimed at imams whose duties included preaching the Friday sermon. *Yeni Hutbelerim* was its first book of recommended sermons, followed by a sermon journal, written by the Diyanet and despatched to mosque preachers all over the country. Since 1924, the Directorate has sent out a recommended weekly address and indeed made its preaching compulsory in recurrent periods of state suppression (of civil society).

As chapters in this handbook show, state control over the preaching in mosques became international in the 1970s and 1980s, when the Diyanet extended its programmes to the mosques of the Turkish diaspora. Today under the pro-Islamist AKP (Justice and Development Party) government, the Diyanet’s mediating role between Allah (God) and humans is more transnational than ever as it sends an increasing number of imams and other religious functionaries to state-controlled Turkish mosques all around the world, including in Australia. There, the Friday sermon preached in Istanbul has already been declaimed, ten hours earlier, in Sydney.

The co-opting of the divine through the Diyanet to facilitate the rule of the nationalists possessed one other significant feature as well. In it not all Islamic traditions were equal. Even as the early Republic privileged and bureaucratised Sunni Hanafi Islam, it cast a suspicious eye over Islam’s internal diversity, marginalising Alevi religious practices adhered to by a substantial proportion of the Turkish and Kurdish population. In refusing to fund the building of Alevi worship spaces (*cem* houses), or to train/support Alevi religious figures (*dedes*) as facilitators of Alevi religious life through employment in the Diyanet, the Republic has shown that it disregards Alevism as a candidate for religious-political institutionalisation. Despite this, it also attempted to Turkify Alevism at the same time. Dressler (2013) identifies how Republican intellectuals incorporated Alevism into the imagined Turkish nation by genealogically representing it as a carrier of pre-Islamic Turkish culture (i.e., shamanism). Simultaneously othering it from the perspective of Sunni orthodoxy, this imagined history has opened the door to discrimination and violence against Alevi groups, both in Turkey and abroad. Other scholars have traced how the attempted assimilation of Alevi religious practices to Turkishness sparked a counter-history by Kurdish intellectuals, leading to the politicisation of Zaza- and Kurmanji-speaking Alevi groups (Leezenberg 2003).

In sum, and as the chapters by Çitak, Bruce, Zırh, Cetin, and Jenkins in this handbook reveal, the Republic’s ongoing management and control of religion continues to resonate in the politics and institutions of Turkey’s diaspora groups as well. Disagreements over different ways of living out Islam, as well as tensions between Turkish and Kurdish Muslims (Alevi and Sunni), reference both domestic politics and transnational ones. For both the early Republic and the AKP regime today, forging the religious attitudes and intentions of the population through the Diyanet has meant seeking to inculcate citizens with a Turkish national identity whose morality includes obedience to the militaristic state.

## Conclusion

We have organised this introductory chapter to *Routledge Handbook of Turkey’s Diasporas* around three central issues. The first concerns our response to the ‘challenge of description’ caused by the hybrid nature of the early Republic and its foundational politics. Not only have

we stressed their continuity with the policies of the Young Turks, but we have also proposed that the early republican state is best seen simultaneously as a nationalist regime organising the bureaucratic state and territory *and* as a social movement mobilising the population in ceremonial and sanctified ways.

The chapter's second focus involves an investigation into the core processes of population displacement and consequent diaspora events initiated by the new regime's revolutionary politics. These included the expulsion and destruction of populations (such as the Greek, Assyrian, and Armenian communities) who were unable to become part of the nationalist utopia. But it also involved the movement of populations within the new republic aimed at making a homogeneous cultural population named "Turks" with the production of Anatolia as its territory.

The third vital question concerns the ways these processes live on in the present. We have indicated how these foundational political practices relate to the activities and discourses of Turkey's contemporary diasporas. Yet continuity is also a feature of the Republic itself, which today conjoins the radical Kemalism of the 1930s with the authoritarian Sunni-Turkish nationalism of the AKP government. The continued connecting of political community and citizenship rights to ethnicity, defined in terms of language, religion, and specific cultural codes (İçduygu and Kaygusuz 2004), has created a political culture in which a fear and denial of difference prevails. Today, this fear is mainly projected onto Kurds. The contemporary engineering of populations in occupied Afrin, in which the Kurdish population is being replaced and the province Arabised, and the plans for the same outcome along the border with Syria and Iraq, is just one expression of the unsettling effects of the Turkish-nationalist utopia.

From the Young Turks to the Kemalists and, as discussed extensively in subsequent chapters of this handbook, to the AKP, Turkey is a project, a process, and a state of paranoia all at the same time. As a project, it is organised around the vision of creating a nation that could be called Turkey or 'Türkiye,' tightly bound to Anatolia as its exclusive territory, and from which the state would draw its strength. As a process, it has sought to transform and Turkify cultural practices, from religion to language, from cross-ethnic relations to urban and rural living, from music to the visual arts, resulting in the creation of mass minorities, their displacement, and thus the multiple generations of diasporas. Finally, compounding this unsettling project and process, Turkey exists in a mood of paranoia – a paranoia in which the social movement-state is in constant fear of its citizens and of those it has made into non-citizens. Its response is to ceaselessly seek protection against them (Mittelstaedt et al. 2015), in Turkey and in the diaspora alike.

## Notes

- 1 Speros Vryonis Jr. (1991) analyses the spatial re-configuration of Byzantine Constantinople and of Ottoman Istanbul sponsored by their 'founding genii' and 'daemonic personalities,' Constantine the Great and Mehmet the Conqueror, respectively. Here we adopt and adapt his terms.
- 2 One *dönüm* is a land measurement unit equal to 1,000 square meters.

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