

relations between the US and Turkey may, therefore, continue to remain tense in the future, and not automatically return to the earlier period of business as usual.

In the second part of this section, Taşpınar and Gordon discuss Turkey's 40 year old effort to integrate into the European Union. After a brief introduction about the nature of relations between the EU and Turkey, they discuss the development of relations since the Helsinki Summit and the beginning of the EU accession negotiations. They indicate that Turkey has grown increasingly frustrated by the obstacles the EU has placed before its integration since the onset of the negotiations. Today, the polls demonstrate that the EU's popularity among Turkish society has decreased to the extent that the Turkish people have grown suspicious of the membership process and the EU's motivations for stalling it.

According to the authors, the deterioration of relations with the US and the EU has put into question the traditional pro-Western policy orientation of Turkey. Several different alternatives have emerged as potential new routes for Turkish foreign policy. Among these, Taşpınar and Gordon analyzed the newly emerging neo-nationalist political movement and its foreign

policy strategy of "Eurasianism." Although "Eurasianism" cannot compare with Turkey's long standing strategic, political, economic, and social ties with the Western world, the fact that it has become a topic of discussion reveals a certain exhaustion among the Turkish population towards its pro-Western stance. On another level, the five years of economic and political stability in Turkey has produced confidence among Turkish people, which has given them the courage to seek a more autonomous position in the international arena.

In the final part of the book, Taşpınar and Gordon offer several different ways to "win back Turkey." They recommend some important policy changes to rebuild mutual trust and cooperation between all parties involved, the U.S., Turkey, and the EU. These measures are intended to be a roadmap for the new U.S. administration. These recommendations include changes in Kurdish policy in Turkey; the need for the US and the EU to develop a serious policy on the issue of the PKK, continuous support for the liberalization and democratization process in Turkey, a solution of the Armenian question, the revitalization of the EU process, and an end to the isolation of Northern Cyprus.

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## The Armenian Rebellion at Van

By *Justin McCarthy, Esat Arslan, Cemalettin Taskiran and Ömer Turan*

Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 2006, pp. 266, ISBN 0874808707.

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Devoid of rhetorical embellishment, this work challenges some traditional notions about the tragic history of both the

Muslim and Armenian people of the Ottoman eastern Anatolian province of Van. It is a balanced contribution to a field of

study that in the past has often been affected by nationalist agendas and emotionally charged discourses.

After detailed and sometimes boring information on the geography, climate, inhabitants, agriculture, education, industry and commerce in the city and province of Van, the moving parts of the book begin with the third chapter, where the political and sociological contextualization is provided. Here it is argued that the misfortunes of raided villages were not purely Armenian troubles. Tribes and bandits of the province did not discriminate among targets by religion and the suffering was not sectarian. Furthermore, the Ottoman government and the Armenians were not natural antagonists, because it was in the interest of the Ottomans to safeguard them, as well as the settled Muslims, if only to continue collecting their taxes. In contrast, the Kurdish tribes and the government were natural antagonists, considering tribal-state relationships *per se*. Contrary to an often portrayed two sided conflict, we see a complex picture, where the sides change depending of the interpreter, the conflict becoming Turkish-Armenian, Turkish-Kurdish, Kurdish-Armenian, Ottoman-Russian or Christian-Muslim. But, while expressing the often confused and contradictory nature of Ottoman policy, the authors remain careful not to downplay the cases of extreme brutality and destruction that the Turkish military and Kurdish tribes imposed on the Armenians.

Exploring the acts of Armenian revolutionaries in the three main rebellions of 1896, 1908 and 1915, the book portrays horrible examples of rebellious terror. And still, Ottomans were decidedly lenient in

punishing political dissent. Comparing European tactics of fighting rebels in colonies, like those used by the British in India or the French in North Africa, the authors present the double standard of European powers when it comes to judging Ottoman counteractions to terror. They did not allow the Ottomans the tools that they themselves used to put down revolt, although Europeans were imposing colonial rule on majorities, whereas the Ottomans were attempting to protect the majority against a distinct minority, the Armenian rebels. So, the handicap of the Ottoman state in effectively fighting the rebels was not only scarcity of money. Stating that disunity hampered effective governance, the authors point to another factor, the centuries-old Ottoman policy of dividing power in the provinces between the military and the civilian authorities, whose conflicts caused the government to speak with many voices.

Another quarrel tying the hands of officials was Russian support. Russians rendered great assistance to the rebels by applying rules of extraterritoriality in their favor. Revolutionaries who were Russian subjects were not punished because of the *en force* accepted principle that subjects of European states could not be tried in Ottoman courts. With the outbreak of World War I, the Russian factor in Armenian rebellious activity became more obvious. In fact, Dashnaktsutiun, the strongest among Armenian revolutionary parties in Anatolia, was officially founded in 1890 in Russian Transcaucasia. Openly welcoming the prospect of a Russian occupation of the Eastern Anatolia, thousands of Ottoman Armenians went to Russian territory to be trained in partisan tactics and integrated into the Russian im-

perial forces as members of the Armenian Legions, the *druzhiny* units. The rebels realized very late that they had been betrayed when, after the final Russian conquest of Van in September 1915, the Russians began to disarm Armenians, dissolve the *druzhiny*, etc. The Russians had no intention of creating an Armenia in Anatolia at all, but planned to settle Russian and Cossack colonists there and therefore concurred in the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which gave Van to Russia, not to an Armenia.

The authors provide intricate and detailed discussions of the hostility and cruelty caused by Armenian nationalists relying on Russian support. By arguing that the Ottoman regime never formulated a plan to annihilate its Armenian subjects, the authors disagree with most previous Armenian scholarship on the matter. A form of non-partial evidence, especially the reports of British consuls in Van, is used *en masse* to describe rebellious activities, instead of the usual Turkish state accounts.

This can be counted as a shortcoming of the book. Ottoman documents of the Prime ministerial Archives (BOA) were purely internal reports and had no foreseeable political or diplomatic benefit, and therefore, are more reliable sources in contrast to consular reports etc. Beside the ATASE (Military) Archives, which are not easily open to public and therefore cannot be examined, the authors used BOA documents only in Chapter 5 in narrating the short governorship of 'Ali Rıza Pasha' in ten pages, but they got it wrong. The governor to be killed by Armenian revolutionaries in Batum in November 1907 was not Ali Rıza Pasha, but Adliyecı Âli Bey. And the former was also not even a Pasha, but Ali Rıza "Bey". The

book is -as almost all secondary accounts are- confused about these two names who followed each other in governorship of Van. But one has to carefully dig up when writing ten pages about a governor, otherwise these pages can become garbage. The only other use of BOA documents is to be seen at Chapter 7, to explain the assassination of the Armenian Mayor of Van in two pages.

The most important data needed when writing on the Armenian issue is to be found in the *Dahiliye* section of BOA, which was not even touched by the authors of this book. To show the relevance and give just one example, I would like to mention the telegram sent by Tahsin, the governor of Van, to Talat, the Minister of the Interior, on August 25, 1914. Answering an inquiry of Talat, the governor mentions that no Armenian crossed the border to Russia or Iran, and the Armenians of Van do not have feelings of dispute or rebellion against the government. Moreover, he writes that the Dashnaks will help the government in the war ("Seferberlikten evvel ve sonra Van vilayeti Ermeni ailelerinden Rusya'ya İrana hicret ve firar etmiş kimse yoktur. Bura Ermenilerinde hükumete karşı öyle bir fikr-i ihtilal ve ihtilaf da yoktur. Bilakis Daşnaklarda seferberlik ve tekâlif-i harbiye münasebetiyle hükumete muzâheret ve muavenet görülüyor." BOA, DH.EUM. 2.Şb. 1/31, 1332 L 3) This and many other documents of BOA had to be used in a book arguing that thousands of Ottoman Armenians went to Russian territory to be trained in partisan tactics and integrated into the Russian imperial forces as members of the Armenian Legions, the *druzhiny* units.

Beside these shortcomings, *The Armenian Rebellion at Van* constitutes a welcome

contribution to scholarship on the late phase of the Ottoman state and her policy toward Armenians. The authors should be especially commended for attempting to clear this scholarly discourse from many of the emotional and political overtones that have characterized it in the past. The authors present a documented account that displays both historical accuracy and compassion regarding the tragic history of both the Christian and Muslim populations of Van.

In addition to highlighting the unfortunate fate of the inhabitants of the province, this work is also a further contribution towards a richer understanding of the complex nature of revolutions, especially the lost ones. In light of the massive historiography on WWI, it is quite an achievement in itself to document a largely forgotten episode of this huge conflict.

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## Blood, Beliefs and Ballots: The Management of Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey, 2007-2009

By *Robert Olson*

Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, 2009, 249 pp., ISBN 9781568592756.

Robert Olson has been a pioneering and prolific scholar of Kurdish nationalism. In *Blood, Beliefs and Ballots*, he analyzes Kurdish political activism and the Turkish state's attempts to manage this activism between the July 2007 parliamentary and 2009 local elections in Turkey. Olson extensively documents political developments during this period on the basis of interviews he personally conducted, news sources in Turkish, and secondary literature. The fact that Olson gives voice to a variety of actors ranging from the Turkish political elite to Kurdish nationalists to liberals substantially enriches the book. He convincingly demonstrates how increasing political pluralism and competition in Turkey makes the Turkish political elite and Kurdish nationalists develop new positions. Interestingly, these actors may adopt more moderate and radical stances depending on the nature of

criticisms and political competition they are faced with.

His main arguments can be summarized in four points. First, the language issue has become central to the Kurdish question in Turkey (pp. 12, 41-44, 227). While Kurdish nationalists occasionally put forward territorially oriented demands such as the proposal of dividing Turkey into autonomous regions (p. 99), their most consistent demand has been the allocation of public resources to Kurdish education. At minimum, they have demanded that Kurdish be taught as an optional language in public education. The Turkish political elite appear to be unwilling to meet this demand, and have instead opted for policies to erode popular support for Kurdish nationalists. Second, the Turkish political elite have aimed to counter the challenge of Kurdish nationalisms mainly through economic and religious appeals,