

ROUNDTABLE

## Missions, Minorities, and the Motherland: Xenophobic Narratives of an Ottoman Christian “Stab in the Back”

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This roundtable focuses on the marginalization of ethnicities or religious denominations within Middle East studies, and in the larger realm of history writing. Without a nation-state of their own to preserve their language and history, the Assyrian people and the Church of the East denomination of Christianity fell subject to repression in Turkey, only recently finding a voice. Marginalization in history books and educational curricula is one symptom of broken treaty commitments and lack of equal access to state institutions and funds. In our century, marginalization has given way to something perhaps even worse: vilification and expulsion even from countries outside of Turkey where the Assyrians reside, during a neo-Ottoman period in which parts of Iraq and Syria came to more closely resemble Turkey, a resemblance that included the presence of Turkish arms.

### The Marginalization of Assyrians within Middle East Studies

Within Middle East studies, and even in history generally, the modern Assyrians have been disproportionately ignored as a putative national group, and as a community with ancestral roots in the Mesopotamian basin (the Fertile Crescent, or historic Assyria and the headwaters of the Tigris-Euphrates river system, southeast to the Persian Gulf and southwest to historic Phoenicia). Frequently the region is subsumed within larger blocs: the Arab world, Turkey and the Ottoman Empire, the Persian Empire or the Roman-Persian border, Kurdistan, or Armenia.

The reigning hierarchies of importance within the field appear to consist of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Arab nationalism generally, the modern Iranian and Turkish states and their discourses, imperial history and wars, and to a lesser extent Kurdish, Armenian, and Maronite history. Even in books dealing with historic Assyria and northeastern Persia, Assyrians often go unmentioned, or nearly so. When they do merit attention, Assyrians appear as a fleeting curiosity, an amorphous pressure group disrupting the salutary evolution toward Arab, Turkish, and Kurdish nations.<sup>1</sup> The formal study of the

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<sup>1</sup> Assyrians were introduced in this journal as Nestorian Christians hailing from the Hakkari mountains, and as Ottoman subjects of uncertain national origin, which ignores their own oral and written histories, well-known religious affiliation, and historic ties to the ancient Tigris-Euphrates river system and to the Urmia region in Iran; Khaldun S. Husry, “The Assyrian Affair of 1933 (I),” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5, no. 2 (1974): 164–76. But see Eden Naby, “The Assyrians of Iran: Reunification of a ‘Millet,’ 1906–1914,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 8, no. 2 (1977): 237–49. Although there is certainly room for debate here, referring to Assyrians as Nestorians is suboptimal for two reasons: it invokes an ancient heresy that the Assyrian Church of

Assyrian plight within the Ottoman Christian genocide lags behind Armenian genocide scholarship by decades.<sup>2</sup> Gabriele Yonan observed in 1989 that the Assyrian genocide had been forgotten, even though it had claimed more than 250,000 lives and emptied the Assyrian villages of Hakkari and the Urmia region, among other places.<sup>3</sup> Special editions of this journal on World War I and contemporary forced displacement, respectively, made little mention of the Assyrians or Yezidis even when it was clearly relevant.<sup>4</sup>

### From Marginalization to Xenophobic Threat Discourse

Although marginalization may be a human rights violation and a characteristic of historical amnesia, some sources of law conceive of xenophobia as even more dangerous. According to international law, xenophobia may violate human rights by intimidating persons of specific nationalities, religions, or ethnicities, keeping them from exercising their fundamental rights, and by contributing to climates of persecution and plunder of private and cultural property, as suffered by European Jews, Slavs, Africans, and Roma/Sinti people around 1930 to 1950. Members of the European Union purportedly undertook an obligation in November 2008 to prohibit “publicly inciting” hatred or violence based on “national or ethnic origin,” descent, race, religion, or color, albeit in legislation that conforms to existing principles of the freedom of expression.<sup>5</sup> The directive also calls for criminalizing the intentional condoning or trivialization of crimes against humanity that could incite hatred or violence against such groups.<sup>6</sup>

Turkey has taken an active part in the debate around xenophobia. In February 2008, leaders within the Council of Europe engaged in a remarkable debate in the press. Appearing before an enthusiastic crowd in Cologne, Germany, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan condemned “assimilation” into another culture as a “crime against humanity,” a crime committed when a minority’s ancestral language is “neglected.” He had previously condemned both anti-Semitism and Islamophobia as crimes against humanity, defining them as a display of disrespect for “religious convictions.”<sup>8</sup>

Assimilation and ethnocide are commonplace within Turkey and Turkish-occupied territories, despite Prime Minister Erdogan declaring them to be crimes against humanity.<sup>9</sup> As I

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the East denies committing, and which led to much rancor and persecution that echoed in the 20th century; and it denies the Assyrians’ ties to the land and their history in much the same way that referring to Kurds (for example) simply as Sunnis or Shi’a (or even by their school, such as Shafi’i Sunnis) without reference to the Kurds’ common ethnicity and geographic region would downplay Kurdish aspirations to national or ethnic minority rights. See *The Assyrian Tragedy* (Annemasse, Switzerland: 1934), 9–10. A religious denomination or sect that is not linguistically or territorially differentiated could presumably live anywhere, and lacks the need for a homeland or ethnic minority rights; see Nader Entessar, *Kurdish Politics in the Middle East*, 2nd ed. (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2010), 4, 22–24. Equitable representation in elected and appointed positions also is less urgent, it seems, for nations confronting religious rather than ethnic or territorial minorities or differences; see the Constitution of Iraq 2005, art. 4, 65, 93, 120–121, 141, [https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Iraq\\_2005](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Iraq_2005).

<sup>2</sup> Matthias Bjørnlund, “Integrated Genocide History,” *Genocide Studies International* 12, no. 1 (2018): 129–46.

<sup>3</sup> Gabriele Yonan, *Ein vergessener Holocaust: Die Vernichtung der christlichen Assyrer in der Türkei* (Göttingen: Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker, 1989).

<sup>4</sup> “World War I,” spec. issue, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46, no. 4 (2014); “Forced Displacement and Refugees,” spec. issue, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 49, no. 4 (2017).

<sup>5</sup> “Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA,” *Official Journal of the European Union* 6.12.2008 (2008): L 328/55.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> “Erdogan Cheered by 16,000 Turks in Cologne,” Deutsche Press Agentur International Services, 10 February 2008.

<sup>8</sup> “Erdogan Says Islamophobia Is a Crime Against Humanity,” Deutsche Press-Agentur International Services, 28 June 2006.

<sup>9</sup> The two concepts overlap to a significant degree, although ethnocide might be preferable when ethnic cleansing and persecution remove the culture of an ethnic group from a nation or region, rather than imposing another culture upon that ethnic group in that place; Niveen Kassem and Mark Jackson, “Cultural Trauma and Its Impact on the Iraqi Assyrian Experience of Identity,” *Social Identities* 26, no. 3 (2020): 388–402. See also, American Bar Association

explain below, after an initial phase in which the significance of non-Turkish cultures in Anatolia and Mesopotamia was denied, legal means of repressing these cultures were developed, and a variety of tactics led to the Assyrians in particular being driven out of large swaths of the Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria. Finally, attempts to remember the fate of the Armenians and Assyrians were branded as terrorist propaganda. Ironically, this occurred during a major terrorist assault by the Islamic State group and its allies on the remaining compact Assyrian communities in the former Ottoman Empire, leaving in its wake the ruins of renewed genocide.

### How Pro-Ottoman and Neo-Ottoman Xenophobia Works

The early Turkish republic possessed ideological institutions that attempted to justify the eradication of the Christian minorities of Anatolia, which nearly occurred in Mosul province as well. A disrespectful attitude toward the Christian Other emerged, and apparently inspired the content of Turkish Ministry of Education textbooks as well as Ministry of Foreign Affairs propaganda. Under this “Sun Language Theory,” Semitic languages such as Old Assyrian and neo-Aramaic (modern Assyrian) did not exist independently, but arose as dialects of ancient Turkish, the native language of Asia Minor. Presumably Sumerians, Ghaznavids, and the Huns were simply dynastic names the Turkish state adopted at various times, whereas Assyrians, Babylonians, Pontians, Thracians, Athenians, Romans, and Persians had little to contribute.<sup>10</sup>

Theory became practice as the Turkish government wrote Assyrian names out of birth certificates, identity documents, maps, politics, and schools and other buildings.<sup>11</sup> Article 81 of the Turkish Law on Political Parties (1983, amended 1999) repressed the very idea that there were linguistic or national minorities within Turkey as well as efforts to “promot[e] or disseminat[e] languages or cultures other than Turkish.”<sup>12</sup> The very constitution restricts non-Turkish languages, some of which are disappearing.<sup>13</sup>

In our time, the perpetrators of massacres directed against the Ottoman Christians—and even against related groups such as the Ottoman Yezidis—are often portrayed in official Turkish documents as innocent victims of Anglo-Russian, and later Anglo-American, hegemony and irrational violence.<sup>14</sup> The Anglican mission to the Assyrians, the Russian missions,

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Dignity Rights Initiative, “What Is Ethnocide?” ABA, [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/human\\_rights/dignity-rights-initiative/ethnocide-project/what-is-ethnocide-/#](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/human_rights/dignity-rights-initiative/ethnocide-project/what-is-ethnocide-/#); accessed 1 September 2022).

<sup>10</sup> Speros Vryonis Jr., *Turkish State and History: Clío Meets the Gray Wolf*, 2nd ed. (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1992), 85.

<sup>11</sup> Taner Akçam, “Turkey’s Carefully Forgotten History,” *Le Monde Diplomatique*, English ed., September 2001, <https://mondediplo.com/2001/09/11armenian>; Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Armenian Allegations: Did the Turks Undertake a Massacre of the Armenians in 1915?” December 2004, <http://web.archive.org/web/20010420052810/http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/ad/adf>; Orom Lahdo, “The Assimilation Policy of Turkey Continues on Surnames,” *EasternStar News Agency*, 11 February 2008, [http://groups.google.com/group/soc.culture.assyrian/browse\\_thread/thread/0b51539dc036dfd9?hl=en#](http://groups.google.com/group/soc.culture.assyrian/browse_thread/thread/0b51539dc036dfd9?hl=en#); Minority Rights Group International, *State of the World’s Minorities 2008* (London: Minority Rights Group International, 2008), 141; Verghan Zifioğlu, “Turkey’s Syriacs Demanding Right to Own Names,” *Hürriyet Daily News*, 13 July 2011; Orhan Cemal Cengiz, “How the Names of Places Have Been Changed in Turkey,” *Today’s Zaman*, 14 July 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Olgun Akbulut, “The State of Political Participation of Minorities in Turkey: An Analysis under the ECHR and the ICCPR,” *International Journal of Minority & Group Rights* 12 (2005): 376.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*; Kurdish Human Rights Project, “Education in Turkey,” draft report, 2007, [https://web.archive.org/web/20100602212013/http://www.khrp.org/khrp-news/human-rights-documents/doc\\_download/115-draft-report-on-education-rights-in-turkey.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20100602212013/http://www.khrp.org/khrp-news/human-rights-documents/doc_download/115-draft-report-on-education-rights-in-turkey.html); Kurdish Human Rights Project, “Human Rights Violations against Kurds in Turkey,” OSCE Submissions 2007, Language and Education Rights, Working Session 1, 24 September 2007, 1, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/0/26967.pdf>. See also, Constitution of Turkey 1982, art. 44(9), [https://constituteproject.org/constitution/Turkey\\_2017?lang=en](https://constituteproject.org/constitution/Turkey_2017?lang=en) (accessed 1 September 2022); “15 Languages Endangered,” *Hürriyet Daily News*, 25 February 2009, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/15-languages-endangered-11076764>.

<sup>14</sup> Official Turkish documents refers primarily to Ministry of Education instructional materials, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs 21st-century publications.

and the French and German missions are blamed for stirring up trouble. This disparaging portrayal of the Ottoman Christian resembles the Nazi *Dolchstoßlegende* or “stab in the back legend” that was so prominent in Munich and Berlin in the lead-up to the Shoah and the extermination war against the Poles, Roma/Sinti, Russians, and Serbs (all together, the Holocaust).<sup>15</sup> That this was a canard in the Ottoman Armenian case is demonstrated by many German and Austro-Hungarian observers’ accounts.<sup>16</sup> Still, a Turkish secondary school textbook that is in use refers literally to such a stab in the back.<sup>17</sup> The backstabbing was considered all the more egregious because, as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed on its website for many years, the Ottomans had never engaged in the sort of religious persecution that typified the Christian empires.<sup>18</sup>

The Ottoman aggressors in World War I, like the German militarists in that same conflict, are absolved of unprovoked attacks and massacres. Instead, Western missions are blamed for inventing “nationalism,” which is castigated in indigenous Christians while being lionized among Turkish fascist leaders. The Christian nationalists and their Western allies prompted an ordinary war against internal rebels, carried out simultaneously with a war against Russia, the British, and their allies. The nationalism of the Armenians (and presumably the other Christians, who are little mentioned in this regard), was basically invented by the British, the Armenians having no inherent “national feeling.”<sup>19</sup>

Certainly there were rebels against the Ottoman regime, some of the most successful in World War I being the governor of Mecca and his Levantine allies. The Arab and Armenian rebels, of course, were not the predominant target of the Ottoman and allied tribal attacks known as the Armenian genocide or more recently as the Ottoman Christian genocide, because Assyrian and Greek civilians were not Armenian but suffered from the same genocidal acts. As the allies of the Ottomans recognized, almost the entire Christian population fell victim to persecution, including the unarmed, children, the elderly, and female abductees.

Thus, the modern position of the Republic of Turkey (not to be confused with that of the late Ottoman regime, which admitted the truth) is that the British had invented the Armenian and other nations that sought in 1919 to claim their rightful places among the new Arab kingdoms, the components of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, etc., only to be rejected. These sects, or millets, which tried to steal the Turkish motherland, were mere tools of the great powers, rather than local victims of Ottoman officials.<sup>20</sup>

So the Ministry of Foreign Affairs argued that there was no “systematic massacre” of Armenians (or of other groups, presumably) because although some Armenians died while being relocated, three to four million other Ottoman subjects died of “the same anarchic conditions.”<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the ministry’s website has long featured claims that Armenians killed most of the Muslims of Van and perhaps Erzurum as well.<sup>22</sup> Although there may be

<sup>15</sup> David M. Crowe, *The Holocaust: Roots, History, and Aftermath* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2018), 91.

<sup>16</sup> Wolfgang Gust, ed., *The Armenian Genocide: Evidence from the German Foreign Office Archives, 1915–1916* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), trans. Vera Draack, 2022, <http://www.armenocide.org/armenocide/armgende.nsf/GuidesView/Introduction1915/16En?OpenDocument>.

<sup>17</sup> Taner Akçam, “Textbooks and the Armenian Genocide in Turkey: Heading Towards 2015,” *Armenian Weekly*, 4 December 2014, <http://armenianweekly.com/2014/12/04/textbooks>.

<sup>18</sup> Center for Strategic Research, *Armenian Allegations and Historical Facts: Questions and Answers* (Ankara: Center for Strategic Research, 2007), [https://web.archive.org/web/20110608231935/http://www.mfa.gov.tr/data/DISPOLITIKA/ErmeniIddialari/Ermeni\\_ingilizce\\_Soru\\_CevapKitapcigi.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20110608231935/http://www.mfa.gov.tr/data/DISPOLITIKA/ErmeniIddialari/Ermeni_ingilizce_Soru_CevapKitapcigi.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 9, 19.

<sup>20</sup> Salāhi R. Sonyel, “The Role of Christian Minorities in Efforts by the Great Powers to Dismember the Ottoman Empire,” *Bellesten* (1985): 657–66, <https://belleten.gov.tr/tam-metin/1886/eng>. This is one of the earlier versions of this narrative that is fairly well fleshed-out; others are described in Dikran Kaligian, “Anatomy of Denial: Manipulating Sources and Manufacturing a Rebellion,” *Genocide Studies International* 8, no. 2 (2014): 208–23.

<sup>21</sup> Center for Strategic Research, “Armenian Allegations,” 30–31.

<sup>22</sup> Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Armenian Allegations Concerning the 1915 Events,” 2011, <https://web.archive.org/web/20110223182843/http://www.mfa.gov.tr/sub.en.mfa?c4aa6758-dde9-477c-98c6-335c94c2fe18>.

documentary support for some of these claims, they are rather like emphasizing Jewish partisan activity or German victims of Jewish communists in the Soviet Union without mentioning the documentary and other evidence of a much larger proportion of Jews than Germans being intentionally killed in the 1940s. What is left out of such official Turkish or unofficial pro-Ottoman commentary is evidence—among other things, the following.

- 1) Assyrians complained officially to the Paris Peace Conference of losing hundreds of thousands of their people to massacres, variously estimated as one-third to two-thirds of their total numbers; the Ottoman and the Kurdish delegations had the opportunity to make similar claims regarding Muslim dead in eastern Anatolia, but they did not do so.<sup>23</sup>
- 2) After World War I, there were still 870,000 inhabitants of eastern Anatolia, 540,000 or 60 percent of whom were Kurdish, a figure that grew markedly to 765,000 Kurdish speakers in the 1930s. But there were definitely fewer than 50,000 Assyrians in Turkey or Iran in 1920, and the number of Assyrian and other non-Greek Christians in Turkey declined by another 40 percent through 1935.<sup>24</sup>
- 3) The German and Austro-Hungarian allies of the Ottomans wrote, in documents in all likelihood not intended to be made public, that the whole Christian population of the empire was targeted for killings, and not merely the rebels, so that Assyrians (*Syrer*) and Chaldeans (*chaldäische Christer*) were slain in Van, Mardin, Diyarbekir, Harput, Seert, Jezirah (Djeziret) ibn Omar, Fayshkhabour (Feischkhabour or Pesh-Khabur), Tur Abdin (Djebel et Tor), etc.<sup>25</sup>
- 4) A three to four million population deficit after the 1910s and 1920s may have been made up mostly of Christians, as Ambassador Henry Morgenthau observed, and many of the rest of were victims of what Mustafa Kemal deemed overreaching by the empire for which he fought, after it attacked Russia and tried to occupy parts of Persia, Europe, and Africa.<sup>26</sup>

### The Neo-Ottoman Revival and the Dwindling Prospects for Christians in West Asia

In a turn of events that has largely evaded the attention of many historians and area studies scholars, the Christians of the Fertile Crescent have been driven from their homes in the past three decades of conflict between the states of the region and the state-sponsored terrorist

<sup>23</sup> Sina Akşin, *Turkey, from Empire to Revolutionary Republic: The Emergence of the Turkish Nation from 1789 to the Present* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 132. For the Assyrian count, see, Hannibal Travis, *Genocide in the Middle East: The Ottoman Empire, Iraq, and Sudan* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2010), 260–64. For the Kurdish memorandum, see Sherif Pasha, “Memorandum on the Claims of the Kurd People,” 6 February 1919, [https://www.academia.edu/36999073/Sherif\\_Pasha\\_s\\_Memorandum\\_on\\_the\\_Claims\\_of\\_the\\_Kurd\\_People\\_to\\_the\\_Conference\\_of\\_Peace\\_in\\_Paris\\_on\\_February\\_6\\_1919](https://www.academia.edu/36999073/Sherif_Pasha_s_Memorandum_on_the_Claims_of_the_Kurd_People_to_the_Conference_of_Peace_in_Paris_on_February_6_1919).

<sup>24</sup> Henry Elisha Allen, *The Turkish Transformation: A Study in Social and Religious Development* (Greenwood Press, 1968), 78; Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), 12; Soner Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who Is a Turk?* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2006), 125. For the Kurdish population share in the 1920s and 1930s, see David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 210.

<sup>25</sup> Travis, *Genocide*, 248–51. See also: From the Consul in Aleppo (Roessler) to the Reichskanzler (Bethmann Hollweg), Report, K No. 90, B. No. 1950, 3 September 1915, [http://www.armenocide.de/armenocide/armgende.nsf/\\$\\$AllDocs-en/1915-09-03-DE-002?OpenDocument](http://www.armenocide.de/armenocide/armgende.nsf/$$AllDocs-en/1915-09-03-DE-002?OpenDocument); and From the Consul in Aleppo (Roessler) to the Ambassador on Extraordinary Mission in Constantinople (Hohenlohe-Langenburg), Report, B. No. 2130, 27 September 1915, [http://www.armenocide.de/armenocide/armgende.nsf/\\$\\$AllDocs-en/1915-09-27-DE-014?OpenDocument](http://www.armenocide.de/armenocide/armgende.nsf/$$AllDocs-en/1915-09-27-DE-014?OpenDocument). The documents refer to Syrians (*Syrer*), Chaldean Christians (*chaldäische Christen*), and Nestorians (*Nestorianer*).

<sup>26</sup> Taner Akçam, *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 314–16. Morgenthau claimed that two million Christians had already perished by 1918, before major “Nationalist” offensives on Cilicia, Trabzon, and the Pontus region, as well as surviving Hakkari communities of Assyrians; “Morgenthau Urges Carving of Turkey,” *Los Angeles Times*, 12 December 1918, 1-1.

organizations and rebel groups active there. Still, there has been little academic study of the loss of numerous Assyrian towns and villages to terrorist attacks and bombardment in the war zone between Iraq and Syria and Turkish-backed rebel groups, and between Turkey and the Syria- and Kurdistan-backed rebel groups.<sup>27</sup> Many statements from leaders and even scholars indicate that this is not a major concern to the established order. One example was President Erdoğan's famous reference to the Christians of his country as terrorists and "leftovers of the sword," which is a bit like calling contemporary German Jews or Slavs "leftovers of the camps" or "Bolshevik terrorists" or something equally derogatory.<sup>28</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs implied that the recognition of the genocide of 1914–25 (a period extending to the renewed ethnic cleansing of the Hakkari Assyrians in 1924–25) would inevitably be followed by tearing away provinces from Turkey to give small Christian peoples a homeland, as the various Arab peoples received between 1919–77.<sup>29</sup>

Turkey recognized the Free Syrian Army (FSA)–linked Syrian National Council as the legitimate representatives of the Syrian people, and acknowledged that the FSA was created with the aid of Turkish intelligence.<sup>30</sup> The result was disastrous, first in Homs, Raqqqa, and other rebel-held areas, then through a wide zone of Syria and Iraq that became dominated by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria and allied groups.<sup>31</sup> By 2015, former Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki stated that Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan, the Saudi royal family, and other politicians had intentionally brought about the "disintegration" of Iraq.<sup>32</sup> Syria also had been forcibly partitioned.

Mass refugee flight, revocation of land titles and passports, restrictive educational and religious policy, and violence contributed to Iraq, Syria, and Turkey losing most of their remaining Assyrian populations.<sup>33</sup> The persecution and displacement were such that a few states deigned to recognize the 2014–16 genocide against the Yezidis, Assyrians, Armenians, and even the Shabaks and Shi'a in Iraq and Syria.

The Assyrian Question virtually disappeared from history. As the Assyrians were without a state, encyclopedias often noted that Assyrian history came to an end more than seven hundred years before the Common Era.<sup>34</sup> Assyrian claims were rejected out of hand at

<sup>27</sup> A search of this journal for some of these towns—Bartella, Bashiqa, Qaraqosh, and Tal [Tell] Tam(e)r—revealed dozens fewer articles in each instance than searches for other towns that have not been destroyed, such as Hebron, Jenin, and others.

<sup>28</sup> "IAGS Members See Genocidal Threat Deriving from Azerbaijan and Turkey against Artsakh," Armenpress News Agency, 22 October 2020, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1032432.html>; "Armenians of Turkey Report Rise in Hate Speech, U.S. State Dept Says," PanArmenian.net, 31 March 2021, [https://www.panarmenian.net/eng/news/291648/Armenians\\_of\\_Turkey\\_report\\_rise\\_in\\_hate\\_speech\\_US\\_State\\_Dept\\_says](https://www.panarmenian.net/eng/news/291648/Armenians_of_Turkey_report_rise_in_hate_speech_US_State_Dept_says). See also Assyrian Policy Institute, "Updated: Local Priest, Two Other Assyrians in Tur Abdin Detained by Turkish Authorities," 11 February 2020, <https://www.assyrianpolicy.org/post/local-priest-two-other-assyrians-in-tur-abdin-detained-by-turkish-authorities>.

<sup>29</sup> Republic of Turkey, "Armenian Allegations Concerning the 1915 Events."

<sup>30</sup> Paul Antopoulos, "Turkey's Interests in the Syrian War: From Neo-Ottomanism to Counterinsurgency," *Global Affairs*, 2 April 2018, doi: 10.1080/23340460.2018.1455061. See also "Foreign Minister Davutoğlu Participates in the 24th Arab League Summit," States News Service, 26 March 2013; and "Turkish Paper Views Relations between Rebel Groups in Syria," BBC International Reports (Europe), 25 February 2014.

<sup>31</sup> Antopoulos, "Turkey's Interests," 5. See also Hannibal Travis, "Exile or Extinction: The Assyrian Genocide from 1915 to 2015," in *The Assyrian Genocide: Cultural and Political Legacies*, ed. Hannibal Travis (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2018), 269–75.

<sup>32</sup> Edward Yaraman, "Former Iraqi PM Blames Fall of Mosul on Turkey's Erdogan," Voice of America, 15 August 2015. See also "Survivors Demand Justice after Iraq Massacre," Reuters Gulf Financial News, 2 October 2014.

<sup>33</sup> For example, Nour Samaha, "Syria's Assyrians: 'No one helped us,'" Al Jazeera, 1 March 2015, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/3/1/syrias-assyrians-no-one-helped-us>; Agence France-Presse, "Two-Thirds of Christians Have Left Syria: Aleppo Bishop," *Gulf Times*, March 2016, <https://www.gulf-times.com/story/484825/Two-thirds-of-Christians-have-left-Syria-Aleppo-bishop>; Travis, "Exile or Extinction," 269–75; and Dominique Soguel, "In Northeast Syria, a Christian Community Fights for Survival," *Christian Science Monitor*, 10 April 2019, <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2019/0410/In-northeast-Syria-a-Christian-community-fights-for-survival>.

<sup>34</sup> Cengiz Yildirim, "Requiem for the Assyrians," trans. Rachó Donef, *Cumhuriyet Kitap*, 30 December 1999, <https://www.atour.com/~aahgn/news/20010724b.html>.

Paris and Lausanne.<sup>35</sup> The Assyrian army having disbanded or joined that of Iraq, it is difficult to see how Europeans could have behaved otherwise, their attitude being captured by Winston Churchill in 1941: “Nations that go down fighting rise again, but those that surrender tamely are finished.”<sup>36</sup>

The marginalization of the modern Assyrians in history and area studies was inevitable given the absence of an Assyrian state, academy of sciences, or ministry of education. Meanwhile, it is unsurprising that Ottoman and neo-Ottoman rhetoric should creep into academic studies of the community (and of the nearby Yezidi and ‘Alawi communities). In Middle East studies, as in other fields, doing justice to Assyrian legal, political, and cultural history requires excavating forgotten testimonies, interrogating state-backed narratives, and building bridges across national borders.

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<sup>35</sup> Racho Donef, “The Assyrian Delegation at the Paris Peace Conference,” in Travis, *Assyrian Genocide*, 231–32.

<sup>36</sup> Roger Parkinson, *Summer, 1940: The Battle of Britain* (New York: D. McKay, 1977), 26.

**Cite this article:** Hannibal Travis (2022). “Missions, Minorities, and the Motherland: Xenophobic Narratives of an Ottoman Christian “Stab in the Back”.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 54, 559–565. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743822000721>